

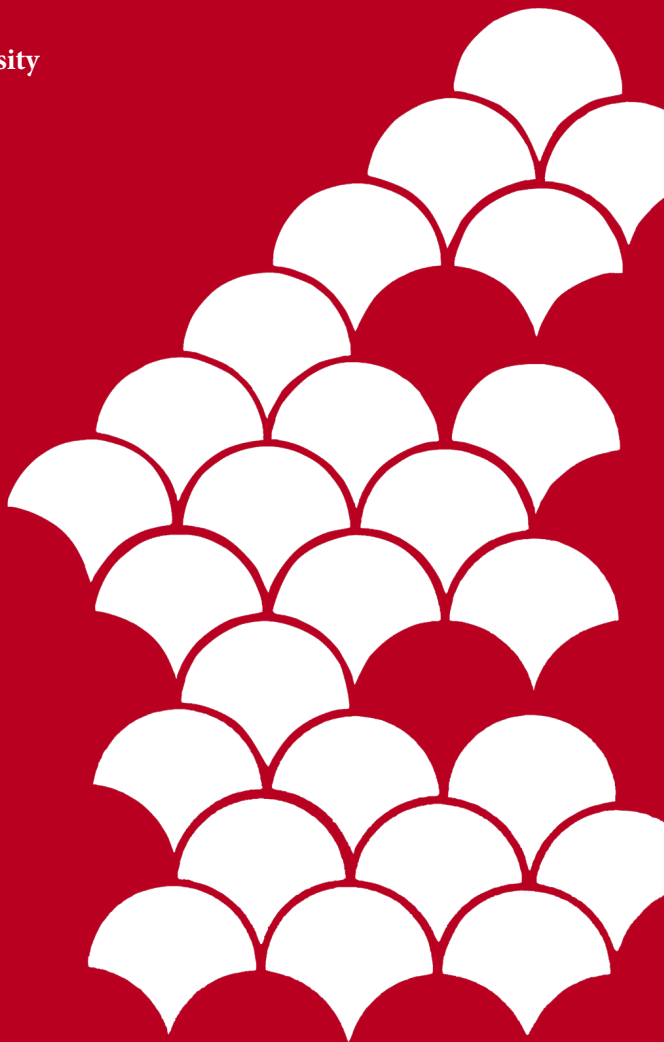
# Room for All at the Table

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2020 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages



# **Room for All at the Table**

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## **Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Report 2020**

Brigid M. Burke, Editor  
Bowling Green State University

**2020 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**

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The Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Report is a refereed volume of selected papers based on the theme of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Abstracts are first submitted to the Editor on September 1 to show that the authors intend to submit a manuscript for review on November 1. Copies of the publication guidelines are available to authors on the CSCTFL website.

All submissions are read and evaluated by the Editor and at least two other members of the Editorial Board. Reviewers are asked to recommend that the article (1) be published in its current form, (2) be published after specific revisions have been made, or (3) not be published. When all of the reviewers' ratings are received, the Editor makes all final publishing decisions.

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## Preface

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### Room for All at the Table

The 2020 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, held in collaboration with the Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures, took place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Minneapolis, March 12-14, 2020. The conference theme, “Room for All at the Table” focused on celebrating the rich diversity of learners and how to appeal to them and meet their needs. In order to continue building capacity for language learning in the United States, we inspired teachers who attended the conference to welcome all kinds of learners to their classrooms and beyond.

At the 2020 conference, attendees chose from 26 workshops, and more than 200 sessions focused on diversity, activities and strategies, curriculum development, assessment, culture, research, technology, advocacy, and more as part of their professional learning. Nine out of 14 states in the Central States region presented their “Best of State” sessions to their colleagues. Attendees learned how to expand their table’s capacity to include everyone.

Dr. Katy Arnett, who delivered the keynote, “Setting the table: The case for inclusion in the world language classroom,” is Professor of Educational Studies at St. Mary’s College in Maryland. A former high school French teacher, Katy has published on the topic of inclusion in world language classrooms in peer-reviewed and practitioner-focused journals and two books. In addition, she has traveled all across Canada, and in some parts of the U.S., to lead professional development workshops focused on inclusive practices with language learners. Dr. Arnett also led workshops during the 2020 conference.

The Central States Conference Report 2020, *Room for All at the Table*, supports the concept of including diverse learners in language learning environments. In recent years, we have focused on guiding teachers to develop students’ proficiency and performance. In this volume, authors present ways educators can support diverse learners to learn world languages and expand their world view. Thank you to the authors for their work and supporting language learning for all students.

Todd Bowen  
2020 Program Chair



## Room for All at the Table

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Brigid M. Burke

Bowling Green State University

When setting the table in the U.S., especially in the Central States region with our well-known Midwest friendliness, children, young adults, and adults all consider who will be coming to dinner. Sometimes extra places are set for guests, and particularly during the holidays, extra tables and chairs must be added to make room for everyone. The hosts' goal is for all guests to feel welcome. The theme for the 2020 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, "Room for All at the Table," asked educators to make sure all students feel welcomed and supported in their world language classrooms. The authors of this year's volume focus on making the students the centerpiece of the table through designing creative, interdisciplinary curriculum. They suggest that by using authentic materials, fieldwork, and performance-based and reflective assessments, students will feel at ease to use the target language and develop communicative and cultural proficiency.

In the first chapter, Sellers shares details of her cooperative, project-based design for a Spanish course on the Latin American *telenovela* [soap opera] in which university students of Intermediate to Advanced proficiency cooperatively wrote, filmed, and produced 30-minute *telenovelas* [soap operas] after studying the soap opera format. In her qualitative study with 17 students, she investigated ways to improve her *telenovela* course by gaining a broader and deeper understanding of learners' experiences during two semesters (2015 and 2019). The research question she examined was: What are learners' experiences in a semester-long, cooperative, project-based learning Spanish course on the *telenovela*? The findings showed that during the course, students experienced a strong sense of group, opportunities for language use and acquisition, growth in cultural knowledge, and enjoyed and benefited from project-based learning. These results indicated that this cooperative, project-based model supported learners' growth in Spanish, soft skills, and their understanding of Hispanic cultures.

In the second chapter, Whitman examines teachers' experiences using authentic language resources and the target language in their high school classrooms. The research questions for her study were: (1) How have the participants implemented the use of authentic texts into their lessons? (2) How do the participants perceive their use of target language? (3) How do the participants make authentic resources and target language use accessible to all types of learners? For her qualitative study, she interviewed three high school world language teachers (French, German, Spanish) using both an open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol and written questions. Findings indicated that while the teachers were working to overcome instructional challenges, they used a variety of authentic resources, were cognizant of their target language usage, and developed techniques to make these resources accessible to all of their learners.

In the third chapter, Olovson and Siegler explore the theoretical and empirical evidence to date related to skill-specific language anxiety across each of the four skills. They provide concrete pedagogical activities and interventions for teachers of Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced-level students. By providing these examples, they hope teachers apply research implications to their classroom contexts in order to help reduce students' anxiety when communicating in world languages.

In the fourth chapter, Case and Montgomery define academic language and review how the construct has been addressed in world language education. They argue that there is a lack of explicit attention to academic language in traditional world language classroom contexts and explore potential reasons for this inadequacy. Case and Montgomery provide several practical pedagogical strategies to integrate academic language in world language classrooms. They conclude that purposeful integration of academic language into world language curriculum and instruction is a promising way to educate students so they can have a voice at tables where people are solving real problems related to science, politics, art, and culture.

In the fifth chapter, Bell discusses the importance of using fieldwork and cultural portfolios with Novice-level world language students. For her study with 118 university students, she asked the research question: To what extent can Novice-level learners of German increase their cultural knowledge over the course of one semester with a focus on German classical music (including opera) and German art and artists? The findings from the pre- and post-questionnaires indicated that after learning about German artists and composers, and their works, in the classroom and during fieldwork to the museum and music performances, students learned to appreciate fine art and classical music from the target culture, and they were likely to seek out cultural opportunities on their own after completion of the course.

In the final chapter, Liu shows the importance of interdisciplinarity in curriculum. Liu examined a SFSA program that brings faculty to the table from the Departments of Anthropology, Geography, Political Science, and Languages by investigating the research question: To what extent does the interdisciplinary SFSA program foster students' intercultural learning through ethnographic fieldwork project learning? The course included pre-departure class activities in the spring, the study abroad experience in China, and completion of a post-trip fieldwork report in the summer. Data sources included interviews (pre- and post-departure) with nine student participants and the program coordinator, students' assignments, students' fieldwork projects, students' daily reflective journals, the researcher's field notes, and program documents (e.g., website, syllabus). Findings suggest that the biggest success of the program was the opportunity given to students to connect their disciplinary interests to their exploration of the Chinese culture through a fieldwork project. Three themes emerged: (1) interdisciplinary interactions; (2) new understandings of Chinese culture; and (3) intercultural competence. Liu concludes that this inclusive SFSA program model provides implications for future design of study abroad programs and research focused on meeting the demand for creating global connections in higher education.

# A Role for Everyone: Teaching the *Telenovela* using Cooperative, Project-Based Learning

Julie A. Sellers  
Benedictine College

## Abstract

Cooperative, project-based approaches to learning are increasingly crucial in today's divided world. Project-based approaches promote active learning among small teams of students who work jointly toward the completion of a common project. This collaboration enhances feelings of inclusion and increased self-esteem by highlighting individual roles and talents while applying course content. The world language classroom is the ideal context for cooperative project-based learning, given its emphasis on the exchange of authentic information in the target language. This article details the cooperative, project-based design for a Spanish course on the Latin American *telenovela* [soap opera] in which university students of Intermediate to Advanced proficiency cooperatively wrote, filmed, and produced 30-minute *telenovelas* [soap operas] after studying the soap opera format. The author investigated ways to improve the *telenovela* course by gaining a broader and deeper understanding of learners' experiences in the course. The research question for this study was: What are learners' experiences in a semester-long, cooperative, project-based learning Spanish course on the *telenovela* [soap opera]? The findings from this study showed that during the course students experienced a strong sense of group, opportunities for language use and acquisition, growth in cultural knowledge, and enjoyed and benefited from project-based learning. These results indicated that this cooperative, project-based model supported learners' growth in Spanish, soft skills, and their understanding of Hispanic cultures.

**Keywords:** cooperative learning, project-based learning, second language acquisition, *telenovela* (soap opera)

### Introduction

John Dewey noted that “education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process” (1916, p. 46). For world language educators of the twenty-first century, Dewey’s statement describes a best practice of designing tasks that draw on learners’ active, authentic use of language (VanPatten, 2017). Project-based learning provides learners with opportunities to address challenging questions collaboratively through the exchange of real information as they complete a task (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.). Project-based learning is further strengthened by selecting a cooperative learning design that best supports the project (Chen, 2004). These cooperative approaches contribute to developing the soft skills that are crucial in today’s divided world, such as respect, tolerance, communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and leadership skills (Mendo Lázaro, León del Barco, Felipe Castaño, Polo del Río, & Iglesias Gallego, 2018; Zhang, 2012).

Collaboration is beneficial to world language learners by its very nature of requiring language use across a variety of topics, tasks, and modes of communication (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013). According to the Buck Institute for Education (n.d.), “Project-based learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge.” Project-based learning is not a “side dish” or “dessert” activity, but rather, “the main course” of learning (Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015, pp. 68-69). The following six criteria, informed by High Quality Project Based Learning (2018), guided my design of the course.

1. Intellectual challenge and accomplishment: Instructors consider the extent to which learners engage in deep, critical thinking and embrace the challenge of excellence in their work.
2. Authenticity: Instructors engage learners with meaningful, culturally-relevant projects.
3. Public product: Learners’ share, talk about, and receive feedback from an audience beyond the classroom.
4. Collaboration: Learners collaborate with one another, mentors, experts, and community members.
5. Project management: Learners develop skills to manage their own and their team’s work through the various stages of the project by using processes, tools, and strategies.
6. Reflection: Learners’ reflect on their learning and contributions, as well as their learning of course content and related skills.

This article details the design of a cooperative, project-based learning Spanish course on the Latin American *telenovela* [soap opera]. In this course, university students of Intermediate-Mid to Advanced-High proficiency in Spanish (based on my training in the four-day ACTFL OPI Assessment Workshop and *ACTFL 2012 Proficiency guidelines*) studied *telenovelas* [soap operas] as a cultural product before cooperatively writing, filming, and producing a 30-minute *telenovela*. The course

fulfilled the six criteria and the elements Larmer et al. (2015) identify as essential for “Gold Standard PBL” (p. 34), beginning with the design challenge of creating a final product representative of authentic *telenovelas* [soap operas] and Latin American culture. This format was chosen because of the benefits of language learning that dramatic projects have offered students. Dramatic projects place cooperation naturally at their center as participants must work as a team to create a product and develop their characters in relationship to others. Such projects serve as a concrete and visual form by which learners can demonstrate their learning (Heathcote, 1984). Drama means “to live through” and experience different ways of thinking and events (Heathcote, 1984, p. 80). Although the roles learners play are fictitious, dramatic activity still “offers an authentic purpose for reading, using dynamic language, and communicating ideas” (Flynn, 2019, p. ii). Such activities encourage the growth of both language and social skills (Edmiston & McKibben, 2011; Moss & Van Duzer, 1998).

During its first implementation at the University of Wyoming in 2004, the class was taught as a 3-week summer course. Learners represented a range of experiences, ranging from those who had finished second-year, second-semester Spanish the preceding semester to those who had lived abroad for two years as missionaries; their proficiency levels ranged from Intermediate Mid to Advanced Mid. I conducted action research to address the research question: What are learner experiences in a cooperative, content-based Spanish course? Learners’ comments were gathered through individual, small group, and focus group interviews, as well as reflection papers, and anonymous course evaluations, which all informed my future implementations of the course. Findings from this study indicated that learners preferred active, hands-on learning that allowed them to work as a team to create a concrete product using Spanish while learning technological skills (Sellers, 2005). Specifically, learners expressed the desire to have more time to study course topics and to work on the *telenovela* project. As a result, I determined that a semester-long format would be ideal. At Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, I implemented the *telenovela* [soap opera] course as a 4000-level, full-semester topics course in 2015 and 2019. In 2015, students were provided with an iPad for the semester, which was part of Benedictine College’s iPad Project. Due to the topics course focus rotating between Latin America and the Peninsula, I did not teach the course again until 2019. By then, the iPad Project no longer existed, but the ever-evolving cell phone industry had made it common for all learners in the course to have Smartphones, and they were used to filming with them.

Upon completion of the 2015 and 2019 courses, I examined learners’ experiences with the new semester-long course design. By gathering data from learners’ filmed reflections, anonymous course evaluations, and the *telenovela* projects, I addressed the research question: What are learners’ experiences in a semester-long, cooperative, project-based learning Spanish course on the *telenovela* [soap opera]? The findings from this study showed that during the course students experienced a strong sense of group, opportunities for language use and acquisition, growth in cultural knowledge, and enjoyed and benefited from project-based learning. These results indicated that this cooperative, project-based model supported learners’ growth in Spanish, soft skills, and their understanding of Hispanic cultures.

## Review of literature

### *The telenovela: Latin American products, practices, and perspectives*

The *telenovela* is a Latin American melodramatic television production. *Telenovelas* portray an assortment of subjects, but they represent “a world” rather than “the world” (Pearson, 2005, p. 402). This world is portrayed “in a familiar time interval that mediates between historical time and the time of personal real life” (Rincón, 2017, p. 3). The world of the *telenovela*, be it contemporary, historic, or the popular *narconovela* (soap opera about drug trafficking and traffickers), contributes to the social imaginary of the viewing audience, that is, to the “the general set of expectations about the social life that lies just beyond everyday experience” (Clifford, 2005, p. 365). The worlds these programs represent also may portray a nation’s idealized reality (Garnier & Valenti, 1995; Rincón, 1999). At times, governments have censored or impacted *telenovelas* to this end; at other times, they have shaped politics and society by exposing corruption, scandals, or confronting topics of national importance (Abad-Izquierdo, 2011; Ekman, 1997; Garnier & Valenti, 1995). The *telenovela* is so pervasive in Latin America that it has “become a reference point in politics” with elected leaders throughout the region who “governed in telenovela style” (Rincón, 2017, p. 6) as strong male characters rushing to the rescue of the feminized nation. The *telenovela* as a cultural product of Latin America and viewing them as a cultural practice lend themselves to discussions about related cultural perspectives. These include, for example, the role and importance of family in society, *amiguismo* [cronyism], gender roles, and class expectations for economic improvement. Historical and period shows also provide windows into current interpretations of the national past, or contexts in which to consider present-day concerns. For example, *La Pola* (nickname for the titular character), is a Colombian *telenovela* based on the life of a war of independence heroine Policarpa Salavarrieta (Pérez Flórez, 2010–2011). This twenty-first century production challenges the white, male-dominated accounts of independence that are commonly embraced as historically accurate by portraying a multiracial society in which individuals of all races, genders, and ages participate (Oviedo, 2017).

*Telenovelas* portray individuals of diverse social classes, ages, and genders, and these same audiences consume them. Plots revolve around relationships—friendship, love, neighborhoods, and nations (Rincón, 2017)—all of which are topics with broad appeal. As a result, *telenovelas* fill the prime-time slots. In contrast to North American soap operas, a *telenovela* does not go on for seasons or years, but rather, consists of a specific set of one-hour episodes (150–180) spanning several months to one year. Whereas North American soap operas often focus on the upper classes, *telenovelas* portray the possibilities of overcoming obstacles such as social class, financial difficulties, and political instability (Martínez, 2005).

The *telenovela* displays format-specific characteristics and norms (Carvajal & Molina, 1999). This format descends from the melodramas of France and England, dating back to the late 1790s (Carvajal & Molina, 1999; Rincón, 2017). In Latin America, the practice of reading novels aloud in installments in the Cuban tobacco



factories morphed into the *culebrones* (*radionovelas*) [serials delivered via radio] of the early twentieth century (Martínez, 2005). As a melodramatic, popular format, *telenovela* plots focus more on emotions and actions than dialogue, and they interweave a main plot line with multiple subplots. Highly emotional topics, such as betrayal, revenge, emotional blackmail, unrequited love, and generational conflicts are common themes, easily recognizable to viewers. *Telenovelas'* fragmentation into individual installments or chapters further heighten the melodrama as commercials internally interrupt episodes, and each episode ends with a cliffhanger (Trejo Silva, 2011). Despite these moments of tension that keep viewers on their seats, the Latin American *telenovela* format promises a happy ending (de San Miguel, n.d.). Soap operas that deviate from these norms elicit visceral reactions from their viewers. For example, when an audience-favorite character, Gabriel Musi, met his untimely death in the second season of *Mi marido tiene más familia* [My husband has more family], viewers were indignant (Barboza, 2018; Pineda, Mijares, Ferro, & Ruffo, 2018).

*Telenovela* characters tend to follow established types, and it is in the very repetition of tropes and types that viewers find enjoyment (Rincón, 2017). Protagonists consist of a Cinderella-type heroine, good-hearted, often naïve, and commonly poor, who must take risks and overcome many obstacles to discover love (Mazziotti, 2017). Her male counterpart is the *galán* [leading man] whose good looks attract multiple characters, although he is only interested in the leading lady (de San Miguel, n.d.). They are driven apart, either by class, family, misunderstanding, duty, or the nefarious deeds of the antagonists. The *villanos* [antagonists] attempt to separate the couple for a variety of reasons, with an ebb and flow of success to move the plot along. Supporting roles include mentor figures (e.g., priests, teachers, parents), the protagonists' best friends, the antagonist's understudy, and the faithful employee (de San Miguel, n.d.). In addition to backstory and costuming, a character's linguistic crutches and registers become hallmarks that set them apart (Cisneros Estupiñán, Olave Arias, & Rojas García, 2009). Although *telenovelas* across the years repeat these same character types, it is their interpretation within a plot that makes them unique, beloved, or abhorred.

The *telenovela* plot consists of a complete story line that revolves around romance, although the text as a whole remains open, which leaves a number of spaces for viewers to fill with their own interpretations and experiences (Carvajal & Molina, 1999.) The series concludes with an ending that wraps up the story while still being open enough to allow viewers the space to imagine. Secrets are essential to plots, and the action unfolds as each secret is revealed (Carvajal & Molina, 1999). Love triangles, lost love, and impossible love are ubiquitous to the *telenovela*, and true love and poetic justice always prevail.

A more recent feature of *telenovelas* is the inclusion of product placement. This has ranged from using a specific product as a prop, such as Lala milk in breakfast scenes in *Por ella soy Eva* (known by its international title, *Me, Her, and Eva*), or having complete integration into the plot line, such as the New Avon Company in *Una familia con suerte* [A lucky family] or General Motors Company in *Eva Luna* (named after the title character, Eva González) (Avon a escena, 2011; Osorio,

2011-2012; Romero, Rodríguez & Robles, 2012; Tinoco & Sotomayor, 2010-2011; Vega, 2011). In some cases, this goes beyond simple product placement to become social merchandising in an effort to impact viewers' opinions and consumption of products (Rosas-Moreno, 2017). The products featured in a *telenovela* provide insights into the daily life and aspirations of its consumers. Product placement and social merchandising, then, become a two-way mirror that reflects and projects the needs and desires of a group and their daily practices.

*Cooperative learning and dramatic role play to improve language acquisition*

Unlike simple group work, cooperative learning consists of “small groups of learners working together as a team to solve a problem, complete a task, or accomplish a common goal” (Artz & Newman, 1990, p. 448). There are different approaches to cooperative learning, but they all benefit learners with enhanced achievement and motivation, deeper and higher-order reasoning, increased self-confidence and social skills, growth in developing and maintaining relationships, and a strong sense of self-esteem and inclusion (Baer, 2003; Ghaith, 2003; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1986; Phipps, Phipps, & Higgins, 2001; Sawyer, Obeid, Bublitz, Schwartz, Brooks, & Richmond, 2017). Johnson et al. (1986) argue, “[k]nowledge and skills are of no use if the student cannot apply them in cooperative interaction with other people” (p. 11).

According to Brandt (1987), and Johnson et al. (1986), cooperative learning's success depends on five elements. First, cooperative learning is based on positive interdependence, that is, recognizing that an individual's success depends on the group's success, and that all teammates must contribute to the cooperative task. Second, effective interaction and communication require learners to discuss course material, state opinions, and integrate material. Third, individual accountability promotes each team member's contributions to the learning task. Fourth, tasks must call on and promote team and soft skills. Fifth, group processing and self-assessment foster the identification of areas for improvement in teamwork (Brandt, 1987; Johnson et al., 1986).

Just as “[p]air work is not necessarily communicative,” group work is not necessarily cooperative (VanPatten, 2017, p. 79). In fact, group work that is not designed with the five key elements identified can give rise to competitiveness and individualism (Brandt, 1987; Johnson et al., 1986). Strom and Strom (2002) believe instructors must guide learners as they develop the soft skills needed for teamwork, for “[I]t is a fallacy to assume that teamwork skills can materialize merely by engaging in group activities” (p. 318). For cooperative learning to be effective, instructors must demonstrate, model, and allow for the practice of cooperative skills through role play and/or planned activities (Johnson et al., 1986). Furthermore, in world language classrooms, these activities should be conducted in the target language (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013). In world language courses, “[p]re-project activities that introduce problem-solving strategies, language for negotiation, and methods for developing plans are useful” (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998, p. 3). An effective design also allows for learners to self-assess their work as a member of the team and to identify areas for improvement (Brandt, 1987; Johnson et al., 1986).

Edmiston and McKibben (2011) identify dramatic play as an element of first-language acquisition, noting that “[a]cting as if we were other people is highly significant for literacy learning: this is what young children do in dramatic playing and what young people do when they act as characters” (p. 90). Drama provides students with the “need to deliberate, negotiate, implement decisions and assess consequences,” which is an essential part of the language learning process (O’Neill & Lambert, 1994, p. 18). Assuming a dramatic role is likewise useful in challenging world language learners to use the target language in broader contexts than what they might commonly encounter within the four walls of the classroom. Dramatic activity encourages speech that surpasses formulaic patterns and promotes richer speech outside of the classroom (Kempe, 2003). This is crucial to supporting learners’ growth in higher levels of language proficiency, since the context of the traditional classroom is static, as VanPatten (2017) observes:

In classrooms, context exerts a major and hidden constraint on communication. This is because the context never changes.... The participants and their social roles never change; the students are always the students, and the instructor is always the instructor....It is a fixed setting with the same participants every time they meet. (p. 8)

VanPatten (2017) further reminds us that taking the fixed nature of the classroom into consideration is essential for educators to “create activities or tasks that encourage students to use language to learn about themselves and the world around them” and that foster communication (p. 16).

Playing a role encourages learners to explore situations and points of view. Pinciotti (1993) states that dramatic activities allow learners to assume different roles and encounter new experiences. These activities encourage learners to consider viewpoints and opinions different from their own, even if they disagree with them (Luff, 2000). Such conversations and activities contribute to understanding, and “[s]tudents who have the opportunity to consider issues from another’s point of view also gain practice in empathy that strengthens their emotional intelligence” (Flynn, 2019, p. ii).

Little has been written about the *telenovela* as a course topic in the context of second language acquisition. However, in Acosta-Alzuru’s (2017) work with her university-level class on *telenovelas*, she emphasized that the class was not about writing a soap opera, but rather, about understanding them “as the epicenter of the complex articulations between media, culture and society” (p. 39). Christopoulou (2010) likewise introduced *telenovelas* into her primary art education curriculum as a form of visual communication for studying “genre characteristics, production, attracting audiences, realism construction, and messages and influences” (p. 20). Sellers’ (2005) study was, therefore, unique in that it provided both a template for a cooperative, project-based learning course that culminated into the creation of a *telenovela*, and it examined the effectiveness of the curriculum design. Learners preferred active, hands-on learning that allowed them to work as a team to create a concrete product using Spanish while learning technological skills, but they expressed the desire to have more time to study course topics and to work on the *telenovela* project (Sellers, 2005).

Methodology

Course design

The *telenovela* class, from which participants for the original study were recruited, took place as an intensive, three-week summer course at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming (May 17-June 4, 2004) (Sellers, 2005). Given the significant changes I made to the course design when I adapted it to a semester-long format at Benedictine College (Atchison, Kansas), I conducted follow-up research in 2015 and 2019, which I report here. I designed the *telenovela* course based on Kagan’s (1985) Co-op Co-op method. The stages of Co-op Co-op and how these translated into the semester-long *telenovela* course are summarized in Table 1. All course rubrics, and the peer- and self-evaluation templates are provided in Appendices A-G.

Table 1. Stages of Co-op Co-op and Course Components

Co-op Co-op Stage	Telenovela Course Component
Student-Centered Class Discussion	Learners read and discuss articles, documentary, and soap opera clips; Individual students serve as discussion leaders on a given topic
Selection of Student Learning Teams	Professor chooses teams
Team Building	Ice-breaker activities and games
Team Topic Selection	Teams determine main plot, product placement, and commercials
Mini-topic Selection	Learners divide roles and labor
Mini-topic Preparation	Learners determine characters’ personality, linguistic markers, traits; Script-writing divided by scenes; Write two commercials
Mini-topic Presentations	Learners provide updates on script and completed tasks
Preparation of Team Presentations	Learners film and edit the <i>telenovela</i> and commercials
Team Presentations	Learners present their project at a world public debut for the campus and local community
Evaluation	Professor evaluates project with telenovela project rubric and reflection video with the reflection rubric; learners complete peer and self-evaluation

Participants

All students in the 2015 and 2019 *telenovela* course at Benedictine College were invited to participate in the study after the course concluded. Ten of the 12 student in the 2015 course participated, and all seven students in the 2019 course agreed to participate. Demographics for participants are included in Tables 2 and 3. All names are pseudonyms to protect participants’ identities.

**Table 2.** 2015 Participant Demographics

Name	Gender	Age	Spanish Study & Experience	Major
Amy	Female	21	High School, College, Study Abroad	Spanish & Theology
Paula	Female	20	High School, College, Volunteer Abroad	Spanish, Art, Education
Marie	Female	19	High School, College	Spanish & Theology
Jenny	Female	22	High School, College	Biology
Kate	Female	19	High School, College	Spanish, Theology & Education
Christy	Female	20	High School, College	Spanish & English
Junior	Male	21	High School, College	Spanish & Political Science
Ana	Female	21	Native Speaker	Spanish
Mike	Male	22	College, Seminary	Spanish & Philosophy
David	Male	21	Heritage Speaker	Spanish & Marketing

**Table 3.** 2019 Participant Demographics

Name	Gender	Age	Spanish Study & Experience	Major
John	Male	20	High School & College	Spanish, Theology, & Philosophy
Tony	Male	21	High School & College	Spanish & Business
Maggie	Female	22	High School & College	Mass Communications
Erin	Female	19	High School & College	Undeclared
Dawn	Female	22	High School, College, Volunteer Abroad	Spanish & History
Elaine	Female	19	High School & College	Spanish & Biology
Emily	Female	22	Heritage Speaker, High School & College	Spanish & Education

#### *Data collection techniques and analysis*

Data were gathered in 2015 and 2019 from individual reflection videos, anonymous course evaluations, and the *telenovela* project. These sources provided insight into participants' experiences and allowed their voices a prominent place in the research (Adler & Adler, 1994). Informed by Brinkmann (2013), I transcribed learners' individual reflection videos to explore patterns and themes, and I compared and contrasted data from 2015 and 2019. First, I read these transcripts to identify main ideas in marginal notes (Brinkmann, 2013). Next, I grouped

similar topics into themes and assigned each theme a color before rereading the transcripts and marking references to the themes with colored pens. Finally, I used the color-coded transcripts to group quotations by topic. I conducted a similar analysis of anonymous course evaluations. I likewise returned to learners' final *telenovela* projects and took notes about those elements that reflected these themes. I compared and contrasted findings across data sources and years. Finally, I listed all themes and combined any that were similar. This process of triangulation allowed me to identify four overarching themes: sense of group, language use and acquisition, cultural knowledge, and a preference for project-based learning.

I addressed questions of credibility through prolonged engagement with the research and its context, persistent observation, and triangulation of qualitative data sources (Patton, 1999). My ongoing study across multiple semesters and years contributed to my prolonged engagement with all elements of the context, making me intimately familiar with them. I was able to identify the most salient aspects of that context as a result of my persistent observation.

## Results

The results of this study indicate that this model of the *telenovela* course supported learners' growth in soft skills, Spanish, and their understanding of Hispanic cultures. In this section, I present the findings by the following themes: sense of group, language use and acquisition, cultural knowledge, and a preference for project-based learning. The data sources I refer to include individual reflection videos (RV), anonymous course evaluations (EV), and the *telenovela* project itself (T).

### *Sense of group*

Learners articulated feeling a strong sense of group in both the 2015 and 2019 courses. Learners described how they became better acquainted with those who they had not known well or at all, and they described the growth of new and lasting friendships that arose out of the *telenovela* project. One learner stated in the anonymous course evaluations from 2019, "I made friends that will last." Paula (2015) described her team as "a pretty close-knit family now" (RV), and she included footage of her team's outings not used in their project in her reflection (RV). Christy (2015) identified teamwork as what she liked most about the course, "My favorite part was having all the experience, growing with all the people" (RV). One learner from 2019 described the cooperative nature of the course as an outgrowth of the college's Benedictine Catholic foundation: "Now I know what Benedictine hospitality looks like in action" (EV).

The plots that teams selected for both courses contributed to exploring new activities together, beyond acting, filming, and editing. During the reflection videos, learners described going places together, talking about the project, their classes, and their lives while traveling to filming locations, and developing ties of friendship along the way. For example, Paula (2015) asserted, "We tried new experiences—horseback riding, ice skating. It was just a good teambuilding, community-building experience" (RV). Junior reiterated how he had been glad to work with "such a great group of people" (2015, RV). Blooper reels, footage of

group time not related to the script, and team photos illustrated this development of team identity.

Learners recognized and articulated their own and their teammates' individual contributions to the project. Individuals' previous filming experience, music composition skills, and experience with makeup were unique. Emily (2019), who played a supporting role, recognized the importance of what each team member contributed when she said, "even though the *telenovela* wasn't about my character, it was important to have her, and the others, because without them, we couldn't have known what student life was like in this setting" (RV). Marie (2015) described her work as more "behind the scenes" yet still important to the final project (RV). Ana (2015) identified the critical perspective she brought to the project as a native speaker: "I saw myself as part of the Hispanic crew of this new world" (RV). Jenny (2015) believed she contributed to the production as a whole: "I had ideas, and I wanted to add to that, I wanted to be part of the creative process" (RV). Erin (2019) pointed to how her role was central to the team's product placement: "My character plays a role in the product placement of Daylight Donuts. For example, in the conversation...about the investigation, I constantly eat donuts" (RV).

Learners identified a sense of accountability to their teammates and emphasized not wanting to let their teammates down. This positive interdependence motivated learners to meet outside of class to complete tasks (2019, EV), to come an hour early for an 8:00 a.m. class to finish editing, and to use Spanish even when the professor was not present (Tony, 2019, RV). As Tony (2019, RV) remarked, "We all held each other accountable." Certainly, not every moment spent in teams was free of tension. Technical difficulties forced one group to reshoot several scenes, which led to some frustration (2015, EV). In some groups, a lack of organization created frustration (2015, EV). Nevertheless, some learners commented that this had actually spurred them to voice their opinions more than they might otherwise have done. For example, Jenny (2015) admitted, "it forced me to have to communicate when normally I might have just taken a wallflower approach" (RV). Learners also observed that these tensions contributed to collaborating for the good of the team. For example, one learner remarked in the anonymous course evaluations, "I've learned many different skills, especially oral and filming skills, and group work" (EV, 2015).

#### *Language use and acquisition*

Learners identified elements of the *telenovela* course that promoted their Spanish language use and acquisition. The nature of the project required learner interaction and frequency of Spanish use both in and outside of the classroom. Dawn (2019) reflected, "Probably one of the most valuable parts of this project was the amount of time I had to spend speaking in Spanish" (RV). Maggie (2019) discussed how she used Spanish with her team, "Having the opportunity to practice [using Spanish] so much as a team, when we were filming, editing, writing the script, was very good and very challenging for me, and I was happy to grow specifically in that area" (RV). Tony (2019) expressed the sense of responsibility he and his teammates felt to use Spanish to complete all aspects of the project, "On one



day, when you weren't there and our substitute didn't come, we spoke in Spanish the whole time anyway" (RV). Learners also identified their acquisition of vocabulary that related to writing, filming, and editing, besides their teams' plots. For example, John (2019), who played the role of twins, described embracing the opportunity "to develop two contrasting personalities in Spanish" (RV), which challenged his use of the target language. In their *telenovelas*, learners embraced their previous experiences in Spanish to add unique linguistic features to their characters.

Additionally, learners expressed a growth in confidence in their speaking abilities, both through their interaction and their dramatic interpretations. Tony (2019) stated, "I think my proficiency definitely got a little bit better. I have a little more confidence now" (RV). Mike (2015) remarked that using Spanish during a project and while interpreting a role was challenging at first, but it became easier (RV). He reflected, "It wasn't always easy to be using Spanish all the time, but when we did, it helped everyone progress" (RV). Elaine (2019) noted, "Working with a team in Spanish became second nature pretty quickly" (RV). Mike (2015) also commented, "I think everyone improved their Spanish a lot in this natural way of using it."

#### *Cultural knowledge*

Learners expressed a growth in their cultural knowledge of the *telenovela*. As Mike (2015) discussed in his reflection video, "The *telenovelas* we watched were oozing with Latin American culture, and I think the simple fact of being exposed to their very own TV shows has helped us better understand Latin Americans." Amy (2015) remarked, "Now, I feel I can speak in an educated way about *telenovelas*' format and their impact on Latin American culture, especially how it affects the social imaginary" (RV). Kate (2015) echoed this by saying, "After taking part in... [our *telenovela*]...I feel like I understand the culture of *telenovelas* more" (RV). Paula (2015) identified the social construction of *machismo* [exaggerated masculinity] and *marianismo* [female gender roles that venerate virtues associate with Our Lady], and how her team both incorporated and challenged these (RV). Mike (2015) quoted one of the course readings to explain the poetic justice in his team's production: "de San Miguel also notes, '*el castigo llega finalmente a los culpables* [the guilty are finally punished]:' This is definitely the case with Traviesa, who ends up dying...and Marco, who ends up in jail" (RV). Jenny (2015) emphasized how the study of *telenovelas* had changed her understanding of Latin American culture:

You may think you know Latin American culture and...*telenovelas*, but then you take this class.... It made me more appreciative of the culture and the people and what we were watching, and what we were studying, and what we were trying to create as a class (RV).

Heritage speakers were particularly pleased to be able to share their first-hand knowledge of *telenovelas* with their classmates. They described feeling like experts when they provided anecdotes about watching shows with friends and family, and about their favorite programs. The project promoted feelings of pride in their experiences and background. For example, Ana (2015) reflected, "I never dreamed of a class where people from here would come into my world" (RV). Second-



language learners of Spanish echoed this idea of stepping into another world and into another's shoes, indicating growth in both cultural knowledge and empathy. Jenny (2015) noted, "It made me more appreciative of the people, and the culture, and what we were studying and creating" (RV).

#### *Project-based learning*

Learners expressed a preference for the active, project-based learning that they believed the *telenovela* course provided for them. Learners were engaged in the project and in using Spanish with one another, even when the class was held at the early hour of 8:00 a.m. (2019, T). In the students' *telenovelas*, learners who had seemed lethargic in the early-morning hours or over the lunch hour on regular class days, portrayed their characters with enthusiasm and energy. Learners also expressed appreciation for having to create a concrete product at the conclusion of the class that demonstrated their learning. Christy (2015) affirmed, "The best thing about this class is seeing the fruits of your labor.... I'm proud of the final product" (RV).

In both classes, learners expressed regret that the project and class were ending: "I wanted to spend even more time doing this project" (Jenny, 2015, RV). One learner echoed this same enthusiasm in the anonymous course evaluations: "I definitely wouldn't mind a whole year of *telenovelas*!" (2015, EV). Marie (2015) stated during her video,

You know you've done something great when you're not ready to leave it, and I am in no way ready for this class to be over. This project and my groupmates have left an impression that I will take throughout my life.

Junior (2015) agreed, "I'm sad that this is ending" (RV). This sentiment was so strong among learners of the 2015 course that they banded together and recruited other learners to create new *telenovelas* for two subsequent years as part of Benedictine College's Discovery Program. Likewise, two learners from the 2019 course recruited others to share their knowledge of *telenovelas* by creating a multi-episode soap opera for the same program.

#### **Discussion**

The research question for this study was: What are learners' experiences in a semester-long cooperative, project-based learning Spanish course on the *telenovela* [soap opera]? The findings indicated that the semester-long course design used in 2015 and 2019 was effective in promoting students' sense of group, language use and acquisition, cultural knowledge, and ability to work effectively as a team. Each team developed its own sense of group identity through the positive interdependence as they worked through the process of creating a *telenovela* (Brandt, 1987; Johnson et al., 1986). This positive interdependence was cultivated from the beginning of the course through student-centered class discussions and team-building activities, in addition to completing the smaller commercial project that was due prior to the final project (Kagan, 1985; Moss & Van Duzer, 1998). The importance of fulfilling individual roles so as not to affect the team was evidence of this sense of positive interdependence.

This cooperative approach increased the quantity and type of language used by students because of increased interaction and confidence. The facets of the project—creating with Spanish, asking questions, narrating and describing in all major time frames, speaking in extended discourse, dealing with complications, inherently targeted Intermediate and Advanced proficiency level tasks within the context of the *telenovela* project (ACTFL, 2012). These tasks challenged learners to use Spanish across a gamut of different topics and modes of communication (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013). VanPatten (2017) claims creative projects in the target language foster the ties between language use and personal discovery, and learners in this course confirmed that the creative, cooperative *telenovela* project both motivated and made it necessary for them to speak Spanish to be successful. Further, roleplaying supported learners' language use and acquisition by challenging them to use Spanish in their dramatic interpretation (Edmiston & McKibben, 2011; Pinciotti, 1993). Together, the demands of the dramatic activity promoted natural, richer speech (Kempe, 2003).

Learners expressed interest and growth in their cultural knowledge of the *telenovela*. Participants were able to identify specific elements of the melodramatic *telenovela* format, such as emotional topics, interruption of the action with ads and cliffhangers, secrets, a happy ending, character types, and product placement (Avon a escena, 2011; Carvajal & Molina, 1999; de San Miguel, n.d.; Rincón, 2017; Trejo Silva, 2011). Learners also explained the *telenovela*'s place in Latin American cultures (Clifford, 2005; Garnier & Valenti, 1995; Rincón, 1999; Rincón, 2017). By using the semester-long format, learners' references to their cultural knowledge were both broader in terms of topics discussed and more in-depth than in the shorter 3-week implementation (Sellers, 2005).

Participants expressed a preference for hands-on, project-based learning, with an emphasis on their pride in a final product. This supports the engaging nature of project-based learning that extends across a significant period of time, and the importance of authentic, culturally-relevant projects (Buck Institute, n.d.; Larmer et al., 2015). In contrast to Sellers (2005), learners in this study discussed the technological aspects of creating their soap operas much less, likely as a result of the accessibility of digital video recording capabilities on mobile devices. Learners' comments that they did not want the project or the course to end reiterated their engagement with it and with one another. While some participants stated that they began to watch *telenovelas* regularly, others have sought out ways to continue to make *telenovelas*, sharing what they have learned about the format with others, and continuing their engagement with hands-on, active learning.

## Conclusion

*Telenovelas'* complete story line, the portrayal of a cross-section of Latin American society, authentic speech in the target language, cultural representations, and the degree to which viewers identify with them, contributed to my decision to design a class about *telenovelas*. Students in these courses learned about the *telenovela* format, but they also participated actively in applying what they had learned by becoming writers, actors, directors, and producers of their own *telenovela* production, all in

Spanish. The *telenovela* course provided learners with opportunities to improve all modes of communication in the target language as they read chapters and articles about soap operas (interpretive reading), viewed clips (interpretive listening), discussed articles, clips, ideas, and plans for their project (interpersonal), wrote their script (presentational writing), presented on articles, and portrayed a character (presentational speaking). Their individual reflections and group presentation at the world public debut provided additional spaces for them to reflect on and articulate their cultural understandings of *telenovelas* (soap operas).

Instead of learning Spanish and about Hispanic cultures “at a distance from reality”, the cooperative, project-based design of the *telenovela* course encouraged the active learning, living, and application of language, culture, and cooperative skills (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 19). By integrating language and culture through project-based learning, students do more than memorize facts; they learn about themselves, their teammates, and others and in the target language culture. While I am always pleased with the growth in learners’ acquisition of Spanish and cultural understanding, what impacts me most each time I teach the *telenovela* course is the way in which groups of strangers transform into teams of friends with a common goal they bring to life through their dramatic production in Spanish through collaboration.

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## Appendix A

### Participation Rubric

Exceeds Expectations 50-45	Above Expectations 44-40	At Expectations 39-35	Not Quite There Yet 34-30	Still a Goal / Missing 29-0 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is fully engaged</li> <li>- Stays on task</li> <li>- Uses only Spanish and circumlocution</li> <li>- Uses Spanish to discuss other course-related and/or other topics even after finishing assigned pair or group activities, and before and after class</li> <li>- Interacts and works cooperatively with others</li> <li>- Often volunteers in class</li> <li>- Contributions are thoughtful and pertinent and make it clear that student has read and thought about material in nuanced and complex ways, applying it to class discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is engaged</li> <li>- Stays on task</li> <li>- Uses only Spanish and some circumlocution; occasionally requests translation of unknown words</li> <li>- Use Spanish to discuss other course-related and/or other topics even after finishing assigned pair or group activities</li> <li>- Interacts and works cooperatively with others</li> <li>- Volunteers in class</li> <li>- Contributions are thoughtful and pertinent and make it clear that student has read and thought about material with effort to apply it to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is engaged</li> <li>- Stays on task</li> <li>- Uses mostly Spanish; sometimes requests translation of unknown words</li> <li>- Use Spanish to discuss other course-related and/or other topics even after finishing assigned pair or group activities</li> <li>- Contributes to group work</li> <li>- Volunteers in class</li> <li>- Contributions are thoughtful and pertinent and make it clear that student has read material and thought some about it and makes some effort to apply it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is not fully engaged</li> <li>- Sometimes does not stay on task</li> <li>- Uses some English; often requests translation of unknown words</li> <li>- Rarely uses Spanish after completing assigned pair or group activities</li> <li>- Contributes little to group work and/or does not interact or work cooperatively with others</li> <li>- Volunteers occasionally in class</li> <li>- Contributions are only somewhat thoughtful and/or pertinent and/or do not make it clear that the student has read the material and/or made an effort to think about and/or apply it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is rarely engaged</li> <li>- Often does not stay on task</li> <li>- Asks off-topic questions and/or pursues off-topic lines of discussion</li> <li>- Often uses English; always requests translation of unknown words</li> <li>- Rarely to never speaks</li> <li>- Seldom to never uses Spanish after completing assigned pair or group activities</li> <li>- Contributes little to nothing to group work and/or does not interact or work cooperatively with others</li> <li>- Is not fully present in class (e.g., gets cell phone out for any reason, texts, surfs Web, plays games, sleeps, studies or does homework for another class, etc.) at least once in a grading cycle</li> <li>- Disruptive / Disrespectful: (e.g., talks, laughs, or makes noise while others are talking; is rude; has bad attitude, etc.)</li> <li>- Seldom to never volunteers in class</li> <li>- Contributions are not thoughtful and/or pertinent and make it clear that the student has not read the material and/or made effort to think about and apply it.</li> </ul>

Total = \_\_\_\_ / 50

Rubric created by Julie A. Sellers, Ph.D.



**Appendix B**  
**Discussion thread Rubric**

Exceeds Expectations 5-4.5 points	At Expectations 4-3.5	Below Expectations / Missing 3-0 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Fully and creatively identifies aim/content of question</li><li>- Fully &amp; accurately answers question</li><li>-Answers objectively</li><li>-Supports argument with the text(s)</li><li>-Response clearly demonstrates student has read assigned material and goes beyond the expected by creative reflection and connections to course content</li><li>-Uses correct terminology</li><li>-Word choice &amp; grammar do not impede understanding</li><li>-Interaction with classmates shows thoughtful and analytical response.</li><li>-Responds to two classmates</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identifies aim/content of question</li><li>-Answers question accurately</li><li>-Answers objectively</li><li>-Supports argument with the text(s)</li><li>- Response demonstrates student has read assigned materials</li><li>-Uses correct terminology</li><li>-Word choice &amp; grammar mostly do not impede understanding</li><li>-Interaction with classmates shows thoughtful response.</li><li>-Responds to two classmates.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Does not accurately or fully identify aim/content of question</li><li>-Does not fully or accurately answer the question</li><li>-Does not support arguments with the text(s)</li><li>- Response demonstrates learner has read assigned materials only superficially OR that learner has not read assigned materials at all</li><li>- Uses incorrect terminology</li><li>-Word choice and grammar impede understanding</li><li>-Interaction with classmates is superficial.</li><li>-Interacts with one classmate only.</li><li>-Responds to fewer than two classmates.</li><li>-Missing</li></ul>

TOTAL:    / 5  
Rubric created by Julie A. Sellers, Ph.D.



## Appendix C

### Discussion leader Rubric

	Exceeds Expectations 20-18	Above Expectations 17.5-16	At Expectations 15.5-14	Not Quite There Yet 13.5-12	Still a Goal / Missing 11.5-0
Overview	-Thoroughly, accurately, and creatively introduces topic(s) and main points	-Thoroughly and accurately introduces topic(s) and main points	-Accurately introduces topic(s) and main points	-Introduces only some of the topic(s) and/or main points -Somewhat inaccurate -Rotely reads from materials	-Inaccurate and/or incomplete introduction of topic(s) and/or main points -Missing
Accompanying Materials (PowerPoint, Handout)	-Accompanying materials present information in an enlightening way, accurately and creatively without being text-heavy -Does not read off accompanying materials	-Accompanying materials present information accurately and creatively without being text-heavy -Does not read off accompanying materials	-Accompanying materials present information accurately without being text-heavy -Does not read off accompanying materials	-Accompanying materials inaccurately present some information -Somewhat text-heavy -Reads off accompanying materials	-Accompanying materials inaccurately present information -Text-heavy -Relies heavily on reading off accompanying materials -Missing
Understanding of Material	-Shows accurate, creative, and active synthesis of materials -Makes connections to previous class materials and discussions	-Shows accurate and active synthesis of readings -Makes connections to previous class materials and discussions	-Shows accurate synthesis of readings -Makes connections to previous class materials and discussions	-Shows an understanding of basic concepts in the readings -Few connections to previous class materials and discussions	-Does not show an understanding of basic concepts in readings -No connections to previous class materials and/or discussions -Missing
Discussion Questions	-Poses questions for discussion that go beyond mere recitation from readings and that draw on a variety of previous materials	-Poses questions for discussion that go beyond mere recitation from readings and that draw on some previous materials	-Poses questions for discussion that go beyond mere recitation from readings	-Poses few questions for discussion and/or are solely based in the readings	-Poses few to no questions for discussion -Missing
Discussion Management	-Leads a productive, animated, and engaging discussion -Keeps discussion on topic -Creatively inspires and encourages participation -Does not lecture	-Leads a productive, engaging discussion -Keeps discussion on topic -Encourages participation -Does not lecture	-Leads a productive discussion that flows at its own pace -Keeps discussion on topic -Encourages participation -Does not lecture	-Leads a very free-flowing discussion that it is not highly productive -Veers off topic at times -Calls on classmates to elicit participation -Lectures	-Leads an unproductive discussion -Discussion is off-topic -Does not encourage participation -Lectures -Missing

TOTAL: / 100

Rubric created by Julie A. Sellers, Ph.D.

### Appendix D

#### Telenovela project Rubric

	Exceeds Expectations 50-45	Above Expectations 44-40	At Expectations 39-35	Not Quite There Yet 34-30	Still a Goal / Missing 29-0 points
Content	-Thoroughly, accurately, and creatively integrates common characteristics of the <i>telenovela</i> format	-Thoroughly and accurately integrates common characteristics of the <i>telenovela</i> format	-Accurately integrates common characteristics of the <i>telenovela</i> format	-Integrates only some of the common characteristics of the <i>telenovela</i> format and/or does not accurately integrate them	-Inaccurate and/or incomplete integration of common characteristics of the <i>telenovela</i> format - Missing
Structure	-Thoroughly, accurately, and creatively integrates the structural norms of the <i>telenovela</i> format	-Thoroughly and accurately integrates the structural norms of the <i>telenovela</i> format	-Accurately integrates the basic structural norms of the <i>telenovela</i> format	- Somewhat integrates the basic structural norms of the <i>telenovela</i> format	-Inaccurate and/or incomplete integration of basic structural norms of the <i>telenovela</i> format - Missing
Teamwork	-Completely fulfills individual roles within team -Values others and their contributions -Interacts and works cooperatively -Does not dominate -Motivates and encourages team members -Volunteers for leadership roles -Attends and participates in World Public Debut	-Completely fulfills individual roles within team -Values others and their contributions -Interacts and works cooperatively -Does not dominate -Motivates and encourages team members -Attends and participates in World Public Debut	-Completely fulfills individual roles within team -Values others and their contributions -Interacts and works cooperatively -Does not dominate -Attends and participates in World Public Debut	-Does not fulfill all of individual roles within team -Does not always respect others and/or their contributions -Not always willing to interact and work cooperatively with others -Sometimes dominates -Attends and participates in World Public Debut	-Does not fulfill many if any individual roles within team -Disrespectful to others and of their contributions -Does not interact and/or work cooperatively -Dominates -Does not attend World Public Debut -Missing
Language Use	-Product is rich in appropriate and accurate language with attention to language use for character development	-Product is rich in appropriate and accurate language	-Product accurately and appropriately uses language	- Vocabulary is limited and/or learner inaccurately uses language	- Extremely limited vocabulary and/or learner inaccurately uses language -Missing
Language Control	-Could be easily understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives	-Could be readily understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives	-Could be mostly understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives	- Somewhat difficult for a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives to understand	- Difficult for a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives to understand -Missing
Impact	-Product includes a well-developed variety of gestures, creative visuals/audio, locations, effects, and tone of voice to hook and maintain audience interest	-Product includes a variety of gestures, creative visuals/audios, locations, effects, and tone of voice to hook and maintain audience interest	-Product includes gestures, basic visual/audios, locations, effects, and tone of voice to hook and maintain audience interest	-Product includes few gestures, minimal visuals/audios, locations, effects, and/or does not vary tone of voice	-Product makes no effort to hook or maintain audience attention -Missing

TOTAL /300  
 Rubric created by Julie A. Sellers, Ph.D.

## Appendix E

### Commercial Rubric

	Exceeds Expectations 5-4.5 points	Above Expectations 4 points	At Expectations 3.5 points	Not Quite There Yet 3 points	Still a Goal / Missing 2.5-0 points
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Highly thoughtful and creative</li> <li>-Completely clear and articulate</li> <li>- Clearly demonstrates student / team has gone above and beyond requirements to complete objective(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Very thoughtful and creative</li> <li>-Very accurate and thorough</li> <li>-Demonstrates student / team has somewhat gone above and beyond requirements to complete objective(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Thoughtful and creative</li> <li>-Accurate and thorough</li> <li>- Student / Team completes requirements of objective(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Somewhat thoughtful and creative</li> <li>-Somewhat inaccurate and/or not thorough</li> <li>- Student / Team somewhat completes requirements of objective(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not thoughtful and/or creative</li> <li>-Inaccurate and/or incomplete</li> <li>-Student / Team does not fully complete requirements of objective(s)</li> <li>- Missing</li> </ul>
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Completely fulfills individual roles within team</li> <li>-Values others and their contributions</li> <li>-Interacts and works cooperatively</li> <li>-Does not dominate</li> <li>-Motivates and encourages team members</li> <li>-Volunteers for leadership roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Completely fulfills individual roles within team</li> <li>-Values others and their contributions</li> <li>-Interacts and works cooperatively</li> <li>-Does not dominate</li> <li>-Motivates and encourages team members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Completely fulfills individual roles within team</li> <li>-Values others and their contributions</li> <li>-Interacts and works cooperatively</li> <li>-Does not dominate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Does not fulfill all of individual roles within team</li> <li>-Does not always respect others and/or their contributions</li> <li>-Not always willing to interact and work cooperatively with others</li> <li>-Sometimes dominates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Does not fulfill many if any individual roles within team</li> <li>-Disrespectful to others and of their contributions</li> <li>-Does not interact and/or work cooperatively</li> <li>-Dominates</li> <li>-Missing</li> </ul>
Language Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Could be easily understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Could be readily understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Could be mostly understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Somewhat difficult for a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives to understand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult for a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives to understand</li> <li>-Missing</li> </ul>
Language Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ad is rich in appropriate and accurate vocabulary with nuances and details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ad is rich in appropriate and accurate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learner accurately uses a variety of vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learner's vocabulary is limited and/or learner inaccurately uses vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learner's vocabulary is extremely limited</li> </ul>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Product includes a well-developed variety of gestures, creative visuals/audio, locations, effects, and tone of voice to hook and maintain audience interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Product includes a variety of gestures, creative visuals/audios, locations, effects, and tone of voice to hook and maintain audience interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Product includes gestures, basic visual/audios, locations, effects, and tone of voice to hook and maintain audience interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Product includes few gestures, minimal visuals/audios, locations, effects, and/or does not vary tone of voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Product makes no effort to hook or maintain audience attention</li> <li>-Missing</li> </ul>

TOTAL /25

Rubric created by Julie A. Sellers, Ph.D.

**Appendix F**  
**Reflection Rubric**

Critical 50-45	Reflection 44-40	Understanding 39-35	Habitual Action 34-0
-Response demonstrates critical application of theory, concepts, and experiences -Makes outstanding connections between course content and practical and individual experiences and applications -Considers previously-held beliefs -Demonstrates evolution and/or transformation of perspectives	-Response demonstrates application of theory and concepts to personal and practical experiences -Makes connections between course content and practical and individual experiences and applications -Identifies personal understanding beyond the theoretical	-Response demonstrates understanding of course materials -Connections are theoretical and unrelated to practical and/or individual applications -Personal insights remain at the theoretical level	-Surface-level response (no indication of understanding concepts, topics, materials, or experiences) -Little to no thought about connections between course content and experience -No practical and/or future applications of course content and/or experiences -No insights resulting from experiences

TOTAL     /50

Rubric adapted by Julie A. Sellers, Ph.D. from:  
Kember, D., McKay, J., Sinclair, K., Kam, F., & Wong, Y. (2008). A four-category scheme for coding and assessing the level of reflection in written work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(4), 369-379.  
Brock University Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (n.d.). Critical reflection rubric. Retrieved from <https://brocku.ca/pedagogical-innovation/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/Critical-Reflection-Rubric.pdf>

**Appendix G**  
**Peer and self-evaluation**

PEER EVALUATION FORM

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

Attribute	Yourself	Teammate's Name:	Teammate's Name:
Worked cooperatively with others.			
Contributed to an equitable division of labor.			
Completed individually assigned or accepted tasks on time.			
Did work accurately and completely.			
Contributed ideas and insights in team discussion.			
Supported teammates' work as needed.			
Attended meetings and work sessions outside of class.			
Used Spanish to complete all work.			
Column Totals			

Please share any specific narrative comments you have on the back.

Adapted by Julie A. Sellers, Ph.D. from:  
Manis, Chad. Peer evaluation form. *Daily teaching tools*. Retrieved from  
<https://www.dailyteachingtools.com/cooperative-learning-evaluate.html>



# Teachers Learning to Set the Table to Promote Authentic Language Learning

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## Abstract

In 2011, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) published the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills map*, outlining recommendations for world language educators at all levels of study, including use of authentic language resources for classroom instruction. In a position statement the previous year, ACTFL recommended that teachers use the target language for at least 90% of the instructional time (ACTFL, 2010). According to Toth and Moranski (2018), many teachers struggle with how to implement these changes ten years later. While teachers learn new strategies at conferences and workshops, sometimes they have difficulty making them work in their particular contexts. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand teachers' experiences using authentic language resources and the target language in their high school classrooms. The research questions for the study were: (1) How have the participants implemented the use of authentic texts into their lessons? (2) How do the participants perceive their use of target language? (3) How do the participants make authentic resources and target language use accessible to all types of learners? Three high school world language teachers (French, German, Spanish) were interviewed using both an open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol and written questions. Findings indicated that while the teachers were working to overcome instructional challenges, they used a variety of authentic resources, were cognizant of their target language usage, and developed techniques to make these resources accessible to all of their learners.

*Keywords:* authentic texts, differentiation, target language usage, world language classroom

## Introduction

In 2011, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) released their curriculum map for 21<sup>st</sup> century language learning. This publication, which was developed through collaboration with language educators worldwide, indicated that learners needed to interact with a variety of authentic resources in order to become global citizens. It stated, “students as informed citizens access, manage, and effectively use culturally authentic sources” (p. 11). ACTFL (2011) recommended that world language teaching should focus on the use of “thematic units and authentic resources,” as well as the use of “language as the vehicle to teach academic content” as much as 90% of the time (p. 3).

Teaching the way ACTFL suggests may require a lot of re-thinking and re-training for veteran teachers (Toth & Moranski, 2018). During my attendance at the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in March 2016, I spoke with many teachers who were feeling confused, frustrated, and overwhelmed with trying to update their teaching practices. Many of these veteran teachers were uncomfortable making changes in their instructional practices because they had deeply ingrained beliefs about language teaching based on more traditional methods because of their experiences in world language classrooms (Burke, 2011). With over 1,500 teachers in attendance, it was evident that teachers were looking for guidance on how to proceed. The purpose of the current study was to examine how three world language teachers (French, German, Spanish) developed curriculum that prioritized authentic language use and made it accessible to all learners in classrooms. The research questions for this study were: (1) How have the participants implemented the use of authentic texts into their lessons? (2) How do the participants perceive their use of target language? (3) How do the participants make authentic resources and target language use accessible to all types of learners?

## Review of literature

In the literature that follows, authentic texts are defined and examples are provided. Additionally, I discuss the debate over how and when it is appropriate to instruct students using the target language. Lastly, issues of learner differences, such as motivation and learning preferences are included as important considerations when making language learning accessible to all students.

### *Defining authentic texts*

According to Gilmore (2007), an authentic text is one that is written by a native speaker of a language for a native speaking audience. Such texts provide “real language from a real speaker/writer for a real audience with a real message” (Gilmore, p. 98). Similarly, other authors have indicated that an authentic text is created to convey a specific message to a particular group of speakers by a member of their own language community (Badger & MacDonald, 2010; Crossley & McNamara, 2016; Kung, 2019; MacDonald, Badger, & Dasli, 2008; Simonsen, 2019). Such texts include an array of media, such as novels, poems, newspapers, magazines, brochures, timetables, postcards, maps, instruction manuals, handbooks, menus, coupons, advertisements, signage, songs, blogs, and websites (Chou, 2015; Huhn,



2011; Nematollahi & Maghsoudi, 2015; Simonsen, 2019; Wilson, Carroll, & Werno 2014). On the other hand, Simonsen (2019) argues that a text must be deemed authentic not on the basis of the author of the text, but on the context in which it is used. To base authenticity of a text on the author being a native speaker of the language, runs the “risk of linguistic discrimination” against students and heritage learners (p. 246). Regardless, the use of authentic texts serves to increase student motivation, confidence, personal relevance, and creative approaches to teaching and learning (Burke, 2015; Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013; Huhn, 2011, Kung, 2019; Nematollahi & Maghsoudi, 2015.).

#### *Target language usage*

Supporters of the ACTFL’s position to use 90% plus of the target language frequently refer to the role of comprehensible input in language learning as defined by second language acquisition researchers, such as Stephen Krashen and Rod Ellis. Krashen (1981, 2008) has advocated that students will acquire language when they receive comprehensible input during classroom activities such as Total Physical Response (TPR). Ellis (2005) insists “that the [world language] needs to become the medium as well as the object of instruction” through negotiation of meaning in the target language (p. 217). Several researchers (Burke, 2010; Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013; LeLoup, Ponterio & Warford, 2013; Wilkerson, 2008) contend that, “exposing students to significant amounts of comprehensible input has proven to be crucial to the development of student proficiency and essential for the establishment of mental linguistic representations of the language” (Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013, p. 1). Strict use of the world language is therefore the goal for many educators and has been called for by the ACTFL; however, “evidence from a variety of contexts shows that there is a wide discrepancy between official recommendations and the practice actually observed or reported in classrooms” (Littlewood & Yu, 2011, p. 67). Mitchell (1988) surveyed 59 modern language teachers and found that the majority of teachers felt guilty about their use of the first language (L1) in the classroom. The teachers interviewed by Mitchell (1988) used the L1 to explain grammar and meaning, discipline students, provide background information, and give nonroutine activity instructions.

In an effort to bridge the gap between teachers’ expectations and their practice, many researchers have offered suggestions for teachers hoping to maximize their target language use. Those in support of the exclusive use of the target language argue that through careful use of a variety of strategies, teachers can meet the students’ personal and academic needs successfully (Burke, 2010; Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013; LeLoup et al., 2013; Wilkerson, 2008; Worden, 2013). These suggestions include the use of visual aids, body language, negotiation of meaning, use of cognates, inductive grammar lessons, and offering consistent encouragement to students (ACTFL, 2010; Burke, 2010; Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; LeLoup et al., 2013; Worden, 2013).

#### *Learner differences*

Students enter world language classrooms with innate differences that influence the way they learn and respond to instruction. It is incumbent on

teachers to determine which activities and strategies will help their students be successful (Liu & Chen, 2014). Teachers can use differentiation techniques in the curriculum to meet individual learning needs, such as modifying texts, varying assessments, and using flexible grouping (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2016; Rice & Smilie, 2014). For example, Rontou (2012) and Seunariningsingh (2010) recommend that teachers differentiate materials and accept different kinds of responses according students' level of readiness. Tomlinson and Moon (2013) explain the difference between students' readiness and ability, "Readiness is not a synonym for ability or capacity to learn. Rather, it refers to a student's proximity to specified learning goals" (p. 7). Differentiated instruction considers individual students' "readiness level(s), interests, and learning profiles" (McTighe & Brown, 2006, p. 236) and involves "small-group instruction, use of reading materials at varied levels of readability, learning contracts, learning centers ... personalized goals ...and use of technology" (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013, p. 7). To understand students' learning profiles, teachers pre-assess their motivation, multiple intelligences, and anxiety (Liu & Chen, 2014). After pre-assessing these individual learning profiles, teachers can incorporate flexible grouping structures in which they "personalize learning activities according to students' needs ... [and] provide additional instruction or extended learning experiences to particular students or groups" (Heacox, 2012, p. 91).

Liu and Chen (2014) conducted a study with 212 fifth and sixth graders from elementary schools in central Taiwan who were learning English. The researchers found that students' motivation suffered when students felt anxiety about using the target language. The students needed extra support in how to use language learning strategies such as negotiation of meaning and context clues. In order for students to have less anxiety, teachers need to promote positive peer relationships, appeal to students' interests, understand their students' learning preferences, and be committed to providing multiple opportunities to learn and be successful (Al Muhaidib, 2011; Asgari, Ketabi, & Amirian, 2019; Kozaki & Ross, 2001; McTighe & Brown, 2006).

Focusing on individual learning styles has been a common way teachers have addressed learner differences in world language classrooms (Al Muhaidib, 2011; Awada & Faour, 2018). However, research conducted in the past decade has indicated that the practice of addressing individual learning styles in teaching may not always be effective (Glenn, 2009; Hawk, 2007; Landrum & McDuffie, 2010; Newton, 2015). The practice of pairing learning activities with student learning preferences "is a common 'neuromyth', and their use in all forms of education has been thoroughly and repeatedly discredited" (Newton, 2015, p. 1). Regardless, there is still value in varying teaching and learning activities to keep students motivated throughout a lesson and to stave off boredom (Kozaki & Ross, 2011).

## **Methodology**

I approached this study under the auspices of an interpretivist and constructivist lens. I believe that "knowledge, particularly in social research, must be seen as actively constructed—as culturally and historically grounded, as laden with

moral and political values, and as serving certain interests and purposes” (Howe, 2001, p. 202). Influenced by the work of John Dewey and Nel Noddings, I believe that meaning is constructed through interaction and that caring relationships aid student learning. These ideas align with the interpretivist and constructivist perspectives, which provided a lens through which I designed and interpreted my study.

### *Context*

I have been a licensed K-12 Spanish teacher for more than 20 years, spending time both in and out of public-school classrooms. Before becoming an assistant professor of teacher education, my most recent time in a world language classroom was spent in a high school classroom as a long-term Spanish substitute. When I started in the position, I was not prepared for the changes that had taken place the previous four years while I was living and studying overseas. The changes recommended to world language teachers by ACTFL seemed precipitous, and I was eager to conduct this study to find out if and how experienced teachers were adjusting their teaching practices.

The site selected for this study was a public four-year high school in an upper middle-class Midwestern suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. In 2019, at the time of this study, there were approximately 1,600 students enrolled at the school with 94 teachers. The school had a 97% graduation rate and a free and reduced lunch rate of 3% (Public School Review, 2019). The high school consistently ranks highly in polls conducted by publications such as *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*. This site was chosen for the world language program, its participation in a Seal of Biliteracy program, and because access was granted to me easily as I was a former member of the teaching staff. The school district has a reputation for providing students with a high-quality education, and the students are high-achieving. The district’s world language teachers often present at state and national conferences.

### *Participants*

Prior to the study, I received approval from my university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Permission to conduct research was granted by the high school principal, and all teacher-participants signed consent forms before I interviewed them. A total of three high school world language teachers participated in this study: one French, one German, and one Spanish. The research design reflects one in which “particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). The participants were chosen because they were relevant to the research problem, and I could gain access to the school easily (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

There were several other important considerations that affected my selection of these participants. First, each participant had earned a Master’s of Arts degree in one or more areas of education. Second, they all had been teaching for more than ten years. Third, I wanted to represent the viewpoints of teachers of three different languages. And, finally, the school where they taught is known for

providing leadership to world language educators and students in the Midwest region since many of the teachers have received awards from regional professional organizations. With a large department of experienced teachers, they present frequently at local and national conferences. In addition, one former member of the department was involved in planning and implementing world language standards through administrative positions with several national language-teaching organizations. The direction and influence of this teacher-leader made being at the forefront of language pedagogy a priority of the department. Selecting participants who were successful in their jobs, and well versed in best practices, was a deliberate choice that I feel gave me the best possible information for my study (Maxwell, 2013). Table 1 outlines demographic and relevant information regarding the participants for this study. Levels of language proficiency were self-reported by each participant based on their personal knowledge of the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) scale. None of the participants had been formally scored at the time of the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identity.

**Table 1.** *Participant Information*

Pseudonym	Language & Level/s Taught	Years of Experience	Education	Perceived Language Proficiency (ACTFL OPI)	Age
Gustaf	German Levels 1-4 And AP	12	B.A. German & Spanish M.A. Educational Psychology	Superior in German, Advanced-High in Spanish	35
Sarita	Spanish Levels 1-4	13	B.A. Business M.A. Spanish & Education	Native Speaker (lived in Spanish speaking country from birth to age 20)	58
Francine	French Levels 2-4 And AP	13	B.A. French M.A. Curriculum & Instruction	Superior	34

*Data collection and data analysis*

Data collection for this study consisted of semi-structured, open-ended interviews. This strategy was purely qualitative in nature because I wanted to understand the context in which the language teaching took place and how the teachers made sense of what was happening (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2002). Data analysis was an ongoing process that began the moment the data were collected.

**Teacher interviews.** According to Hatch (2002), “interviewing can be the primary data collection strategy in a qualitative project” (p. 23). By using the qualitative interview approach to data collection, I was able to prepare questions in advance based on my research questions, and then formulate new questions during the course of the interviews themselves. I used the responsive interviewing strategy in which I asked “main questions, probes, and follow-up questions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 6). I conducted one initial interview with each participant lasting between 40 and 50 minutes. Each interview was audiotaped in order to allow for a more accurate transcription. For these interviews, I used the responsive interview technique designed by Rubin and Rubin (2012) that stresses the reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the participant resulting in a conversation as opposed to an interrogation (Appendix A). Interviews were semi-structured in that they contained main questions with probing questions to elicit further information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This format allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers’ perspectives and the rationale for the teaching choices that they made. During these initial interviews, all three participants provided examples of student handouts.

Following the initial interview, I sent transcripts of the conversations to the participants. In an email, each participant was asked to read them carefully and adjust any information or update any of the classroom practices (Appendix B). All participants provided more clarification and description in writing. After I had conducted the preliminary data analysis of the transcripts from the recorded conversations, follow-up questions were sent to each participant via email (Appendix C). Due to the fact that the participants and I worked and lived in different states, they provided written responses to these follow-up questions in an email to me.

Triangulation and trustworthiness of data were achieved through the two-stage interview process, the collection of classroom artifacts, and the decision to study three different language curricula (Creswell, 2013). The first stage of the interview process involved the initial interview accompanied by artifact collection. This interview was followed by an immediate request for member-checking, an opportunity that allows participants to correct or enhance their responses (Hatch, 2002). Several months passed between the first and second stages as I analyzed data, determined viability of the study, and focused on my other work responsibilities. During the second stage, participants returned to the original interview transcripts to update their responses, followed by answering additional written questions. Finally, throughout the study, I kept a researcher journal to attend to any personal biases and feelings that resulted from the data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002). By conducting the study with care and attending to the issues of trustworthiness discussed above, I was able to portray a strong ethical stance while capitalizing on my position as both teacher and researcher (Hatch, 2002).

**Data analysis.** To keep track of the data during the analysis process, I used an online qualitative software program called Dedoose. This program allowed me to store the interview transcriptions securely and then code them using a two-

stage open-coding strategy. According to Maxwell (2013), the initial stage of the coding process “involves reading the data and developing your coding categories, based on what data (including the participants’ terms and categories) seem most important” (p. 107). The initial coding completed during this first stage of the data analysis process focused on the face-to-face interviews and yielded several codes that I compiled into four themes. During the second stage of coding, I focused on the updated interview transcripts and the final email questions. From this data I developed the guiding themes of the study: use of authentic texts, use of the target language, and learner accessibility. For the second round of data analysis, I paid specific attention to the ways in which the participants’ worked toward meeting the learning needs of all of the students in their classrooms. Table 2 provides the initial themes, an explanation which determined my focus for the second stage of analysis, and the final themes for the study.

**Table 2.** *Rationale for Themes from Data Analysis*

Initial Themes	Explanation	Final Themes
Teaching Goals	Each participant expressed their teaching goals for their students and how they aligned with the perceived changes in language teaching.	
Authentic Resources	Each participant described examples of their use of all types of authentic resources in their classrooms.	Use of Authentic Texts  Use of the Target Language
Target Language	Target language usage was perceived to be high, but participants shared instances of English language use in the classroom.	Learner Accessibility
Challenges	Concerns and obstacles that the curriculum poses were expressed by all three participants.	

**Results and discussion**

The findings of this study indicated that the participants believe they use a variety of authentic resources in sustained and purposeful ways. While they admitted they do not use the target language 90% of instructional time, they claimed that they are working toward making language learning accessible to all of their learners by planning activities that address various learners’ interests,

preferences, and proficiency levels. Here, I present and discuss the findings according to each research question.

*How have the participants implemented the use of authentic texts into their lessons?*

All three participants shared the same goals of using authentic resources in a variety of media. They differed with their use of the school-board approved textbook, but all had an extensive supply of materials they used to promote student engagement. The teachers used authentic resources, such as menus, poems, songs, articles, among many others in an attempt to spark learner motivation and interest.

**Authenticity.** During the interviews, the participants discussed at length the use of authentic texts in their classrooms. They all believed authentic texts are created by and used by native speakers of a language. While the French teacher, Francine, was adamant about only using resources from native speakers, Gustaf liked his school-board-approved textbook stating that the book, “had a lot more authentic materials in it. Just for starters, the new textbook series that we have has authentic reading on nearly every quiz and sometimes I give the book quizzes, sometimes I don’t.” His position supports Gilmore’s (2007) contention that if the goal of language learning is to communicate, “teachers are entitled to use any means at their disposal, regardless of the provenance of the materials or tasks and their relative authenticity” (p. 98). The Spanish teacher, Sarita, also stated in the initial interview that she uses the textbook for grammar activities. Simonsen’s (2019) believes it is appropriate for teachers to determine what resources they use according to the needs of the specific learners in their classrooms. The author or intention of the text is not as important as the “final determination of meaning and significance of a text [that] is made by the reader” (Simonsen, 2019, p. 247). Guerrettaz and Johnston (2013) assert teachers should “consciously choose the ways they use a textbook or other materials, rather than employing them unreflectively” and thus focus on “how these materials are likely to come to life in classrooms” (p. 793).

**Resource selection.** When describing the authentic texts and resources that they used during their lessons, the teachers mentioned news articles, news websites, songs, poems, brochures, schedules, menus, forms, maps, children’s storybooks, comic books, advertisements, and various websites. In the initial interviews, the teachers discussed moving away from sole use of the board-approved textbooks toward more authentic texts. The Internet was their primary resource for these materials. Sarita and Francine both admitted finding the materials takes time, but once they were compiled it is simply a matter of updating and creating level-appropriate activities to accompany the texts. It was evident that all three participants chose their authentic materials with care and with larger, thematic goals in mind. Sarita and her colleagues spent much of their professional development time during the school year creating the units for their level-one (Novice-level French, German, Spanish) based themes. When planning these units, the focus moved from an emphasis on vocabulary to contextualization and authentic language use. Sarita explained during the initial interview,



I have been working with my colleague in developing the units for Spanish 1. And, we specifically concentrate on themes. We decide first, “Okay, this is the theme.” For example, we are working on food. Then, we do some research, and what can you do with the food, and what kinds of things would you be able to utilize from the real world that would apply to that.

Francine also discussed using themes to plan her units and has found, “My problem is I have too many sources. I can’t use them all.” Gustaf also brought up having a plethora of materials during his initial interview. He found most of these from German news sites that code the texts according to European language learning levels and include print articles, video, and audio recordings.

**Student readiness and motivation.** A key challenge mentioned by all the participants during their interviews is that they have experienced resistance from students when they integrate authentic reading materials into lessons. Gustaf stressed that when he uses an authentic text, he does so with the students’ prior knowledge in mind.

The first time you do it, they’ll really put up a fight because they say, this is hard. How do I know what to do if I don’t know the words? Then I say, well, you’ll notice that the types of questions that I’m asking. Because I know what the kids know in terms of vocab and structure. The questions I’m asking are easy enough for you to answer.

Gustaf further explained that he uses “everything from menus to train timetables to school schedules” that are at various proficiency levels in order “to meet students’ differing vocabulary knowledge.” Sarita discussed how she observed her students being apprehensive when first exposed to authentic texts, but then after they develop their interpretive skills they feel more successful. During the interview, Sarita explained,

At the beginning, they hate it because they don’t understand it. They’re just like, I cannot do this. I don’t understand it. But I think by the time we get to this point right now - it just becomes second nature. They just know they have to do it.

Sarita, like Gustaf, uses menus and school schedules with her Novice-level students. She also uses advertisements, brochures, and questionnaires. In her interview, she shared that when selecting materials, she considers her students’ level of readiness.

How far does the student have to go before this becomes frustrating? We look at things that have a lot of cognates. We look at things that may have some of the vocabulary that they are familiar with. And then we encourage the students to do a lot of critical thinking and help them to put things together.

Francine, the French teacher, admitted during the interview that although her students find the use of authentic resources difficult, they provide more variety in class activities. Francine explained, “It’s that they know to expect what they



don't expect. They know they're not going to get the same thing every day. I think sometimes they do think it's hard."

All of the teachers agreed that their students tend to find the use of authentic texts overwhelming at first, but they are willing to make these texts comprehensible according to the readiness of their learners (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). They believe student motivation is affected positively by the use of authentic materials (Chou, 2015; Huhn, 2011; Nematollahi & Maghsoudi, 2015; Worden, 2013). They strive to select materials that spark student interest and choice, which supports Kung's (2019) finding that "when students are given autonomy to choose authentic materials they prefer" they are more engaged in the act of reading (p. 102). By using a wide variety of authentic materials, learning the world language is more interesting for both the teachers and students and has the "potential to increase student motivation for language learning" (Wilson et al., 2014, p. 56). In addition, since authentic materials show students what real-world language usage looks like, they may relate to the text and to see a purpose for reading it (Chou, 2015). Sarita explained in her interview that as a result of her efforts she thought students were learning a lot more Spanish.

I feel that in the past the students were memorizing certain words, or a certain set of vocabulary groups. But this allows them the chance to be involved with other things, to try to explore, to actually open up more to other areas. And what I will always tell the students is when you go out in the real world, the person you're talking to did not get that vocabulary sheet that you got. So, that's why I think this gives them the opportunity to be more open to listening, to try to say things, maybe to speak a little bit more.

#### *How do the participants perceive their use of target language?*

In their interviews, all the teachers expressed difficulty in maintaining 90% target language use in the classroom. This challenge has been documented by many researchers as many teachers experienced using their first language as students and believe it is a necessary resource (Burke, 2010, 2011; Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013; LeLoup et al., 2013).

**L1 perceived as a necessary resource.** During the interviews, all the participants claimed that, like them, their colleagues in the building have difficulty speaking the target language 90% of the time during lessons. They agreed that while speaking in the target language is the ultimate goal of a world language classroom, they believe it is unrealistic to do this with Novice-level students. Sarita claimed,

With level one, most of the target language is used when you're giving directions or doing things that the students are more used to listening to. And I really can't – I'm going to say, I know this is going to sound awful because it's not supposed to be that, but honestly, I'm going to be say, maybe [I use Spanish] 75% [of the time]. I'm not really at the 90%.

Sarita's confession supports the findings of Ceo-DiFrancesco (2013) and Mitchell (1988) in which many teachers resorted to using English (L1) to build rapport with students, save time, and explain grammar. Ceo-DiFrancesco (2013)

also noted that the majority of teachers felt guilty over their use of the L1 and often underestimated how much L1 they were actually using.

During the interview, Francine mentioned that using the target language was a struggle for her students because “they simply are not accustomed to it.” She shared that she allows students to use English so that she knows the students understand the content of a listening or reading activity. She said, “First I’m content if we are translating things, if we are looking at some interpretive tasks then that is an appropriate use [of English] but all explanations, all directions otherwise [are in French].” In his initial interview, Gustaf indicated he uses German for procedural purposes with Novice learner and then uses it for all purposes in the upper levels. However, he explained how he uses English, like Francine, to monitor comprehension. He stated,

In level 1 I do as much procedure in German ... I’ll talk about culture sometimes in English. We’ll see authentic products but we’ll talk about them in English. And, because there is that inter-cultural comparison component on the AP test, I told the students that we can talk about this in English in the first year and a little bit in the second year.

Gustaf also explained that he is able to maintain close to the 90% goal because he uses a flipped classroom model. He uses English in homework assignments to explain grammar points, but then he expects the students to apply the grammar the following day in class. The three participants perceived the L1 as a necessary resource for instruction, which is a widely held belief of world language teachers (Burke, 2011). The teachers may not have ever experienced being in a classroom where teachers and students only use the target language, which influences their beliefs, values, and methods of world language education (Burke, 2011).

**Rapport building.** While using the target language is a challenge, all three participants expressed that they build rapport with their students through music, kindness, and humor. Along these lines, Gustaf said:

Across all levels, fortunately, because we look at so many authentic materials that sometimes throw students for a loop, we can laugh about having no idea about what this means, or having the wrong idea of what this means in a humorous cognate-based way or false-cognate based way. So, it really builds community. For example, why do Germans take a bath before they eat a sausage? So they can go from *Bad* [bath] to *Wurst* [sausage].

Like Gustaf, Sarita indicated she tries to use the target language to make personal connections with students. In her interview she shared,

I have a student, for example. *Te gusta* [You like] he just thinks that’s the greatest thing. He’ll walk in the classroom every day, *Señora, ¿qué te gusta más, la Coca-Cola o el Sprite. Me gusta mas la Coca-Cola.*

[Ma’am, what do you like more, Coca-Cola or Sprite? I like Coca-Cola more.] I have another student who leaves the classroom *Vaya con Dios Señora* [Go with God Ma’am]. There are just certain things like that that really don’t relate to the actual teaching.

When Francine uses French with her students, she believes it is important to be positive and encouraging.

Be approachable and smiley and tell them you understand, and you'll meet them where they are. Meeting them where they are is key and trying to just convince them I'm here to help you, we're going to look at your growth and then to try to go from there because it's a challenge. Do the best you can, offer resources, communicate with them.

All three participants explained that while using the target language is not always easy, they try very hard to encourage students to use it. Their use of the world language to build rapport in the classroom supports the notion that the target language can be used to build a sense of community and motivate students (Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2013; LeLoup et al., 2013).

*How do participants make authentic resources and target language use accessible to all types of learners?*

Participants provided several examples explaining how they make their content accessible to the variety of learners in their classrooms. During the interviews and in their responses to the follow-up questionnaire, all three teachers claimed that in order to meet their students' proficiency levels, they modified authentic texts, varied their rates of speech when using the target language, employed a variety of instructional strategies to meet different learner preferences, and offered students choices when assigning projects.

**Modifications and flexible grouping.** During Gustaf's interview, he shared that it is common for him to use simplified texts and vocabulary glosses.

Sometimes I cut. I make excerpts. Yeah, I shorten them. I put in ellipses. In level three, we just read a legal text which would've been really overwhelming but I found some excerpts. So that was all authentic and I glossed a few words there but to make it comprehensible. I just took a few individual lines from each paragraph, because otherwise, reading the thing in its entirety would've been a bit broad for what I was trying to do.

Gustaf's use of vocabulary glosses is supported by the study conducted by Lee et al. (2016) in which students read target language texts using both paper and computerized vocabulary glosses. Results indicated that while the students using computerized glosses fared better, the use of glosses in general benefited vocabulary learning.

During the initial interviews, Sarita and Francine had different opinions from Gustaf on text modification. Sarita indicated that she often uses the exact same text for multiple course levels, but changes her expectations.

If I have something that I can use for Spanish 1, 2, and 3, so then my questions from Spanish 1 would be simpler. The students can again pick up a cognate or they can pick up a word or they can answer a simple question. Now, you go to Spanish 2, then it gets a little bit more in-depth with what you're doing. You actually – what you modify is not the actual material, the text, but what you do with it.

Likewise, Francine discussed how she focuses on simplifying the tasks and not the texts for her learners. In addition, she stated she creates activities that make the text more interesting for the students. Francine shared, “I find the text and then design the task based on that level and that appropriateness and try to make it interesting for the kids too. I found stuff that I knew was interesting or fit well in the curriculum.”

Both Francine and Sarita also indicated that they provide a different set of instructions based on the needs of individual learners. And, Sarita’s students are given different types of supports during a task based on both their proficiency levels and on their individual learning abilities. In the interview, Sarita explained how one group of students might be provided with extra vocabulary support on an activity, while others might not need this list. Still others might be required to write their answers in complete sentences while others may not.

Based on the participants’ comments, it is evident that they use several methods to modify classroom activities involving authentic texts in order to meet learners’ proficiency levels. Several researchers (Crossley & McNamara, 2016; Simonsen, 2019) support using a variety of strategies aimed at simplifying texts and targeting new vocabulary and grammar. Such strategies may include rewriting the text, elaboration, or changing the arrangement of sentences so that the content is clearer. While there seems to be much support in the literature for the use of authentic materials, teachers still need to be cognizant of their students’ proficiency levels and select texts that support student learning (Seunarinensingh, 2010; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013; Wilson et al., 2014). Recognizing that many authentic texts contain vocabulary that is beyond the scope of a learner’s level of proficiency, Crossley and McNamara (2016) “cautiously support the modification of texts using both structural and intuitive approaches” (p. 14).

In follow-up responses to the questionnaire, other ways the teachers discussed making content accessible to individual learners was through personal vocabulary lists, online quizzes that provide instant feedback, individualized instruction, and cooperative learning. All three teachers explained that they require students to keep a journal where they write down unfamiliar vocabulary words. These lists become the learning targets for each student during a lesson and allow students to focus on the words they need to learn rather than spend time on what they already know. These words are then incorporated into students’ interpersonal speaking and writing tasks. The teachers also discussed how they assigned vocabulary and grammar practice activities to meet individual students’ learning needs through online quizzes by using Quizlet.com or portals created by the College Board for Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In his written comments after the initial interview, Gustaf described the use of a new resource,

I use AP Classroom. It is like an interactive, self-grading prep book through a portal managed by College Board. With the self-pacing, auto-grading, and rationale in English for every test item, this is a real game changer. I can see who is keeping up and what the difficulties are and focus more on the productive skills of the AP test at the upper levels and save more salient interpretation (author’s intent, intended audience, paraphrase, personal reflection and cultural comparison) for in-class interpretive activities.

In their follow-up responses to the questionnaire, the teachers claimed they incorporate cooperative learning and group activities in their classrooms. Depending on the task and the students in the classroom, these groups change. In Francine's classes students may be grouped by their same readiness to read different levels of authentic texts, and then later split into mixed readiness groups to share the information they read. Francine's rationale for this style of flexible grouping is, "both groups will get the same information, but each student has the opportunity to interpret and present a source that is appropriate to their needs and abilities." Both Sarita and Gustaf stressed the importance of assigning roles to each student during cooperative group work. Sarita assigns these roles based on students' readiness for the tasks, as does Gustaf, who uses group activities with assigned roles for presentations and dialogues. For example, Gustaf asks students to submit "group documents in Google Classroom with individuals identified as to who completed what part of the work." This practice of using flexible grouping based on students' perceived readiness levels reflects the importance of using group work to support students' individual learning needs while capitalizing on student interest and learning preferences (Heacox, 2012).

**Student choice.** In the written responses from the follow-up questionnaire, the teachers described the importance of offering students choices and allowing them to use various ways to demonstrate their understanding of the content. Sarita plans a variety of assessments so that she can appeal to different learner preferences and enhance their levels of interest. Some of these include visual and auditory options, such as drawing, creating a poster or collage, recording videos, and songs. Students have control over the choices they make and how they want to present what they have learned. Gustaf prefers to use a "combination of print and audio" so that students experience a topic in multiple ways. He believes he uses graphics and songs frequently and incorporates Total Physical Response into some learning activities. All the teachers discussed using games to stimulate multiple learning modalities and heighten student interest and engagement. The teachers seem to respond to individual student needs, interests, and learning styles by building relationships and creating environments for learning, teaching content and assessing learning in multiple ways (McTighe & Brown, 2005; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

### **Limitations and future research**

This study was limited in that it only included three teacher-participants from one high school in an upper-middle class suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. In addition, location differences between the researcher and the participants prevented the possibility of conducting on-site classroom observations. For others conducting similar research, observations would aid the researcher to compare what the teachers said in interviews and written responses with what was observed in classrooms. There also may be a discrepancy between the amount of time teachers said they use the target language and the amount actually use during instruction. When self-reporting, teachers tend to overestimate the levels of their use (Vyn,

Wesely, & Neubauer, 2019). While the school district uses the Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) to award the Seal of Biliteracy upon graduation, scores for this test were not available during this research study. The effects of using authentic resources and the target language would be better understood if student scores could be used by the teachers to identify students' proficiency levels.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine if three world language teachers used authentic resources and the target language in order to make language learning accessible to all students in their classrooms. As a world language department, they had committed to follow these recommendations for world language teachers set forth by ACTFL in 2010 and 2011. It seems that the teachers believed they were creating opportunities for all students in their classrooms to learn the world language, regardless of their proficiency level or learning preferences by (1) collaborating with colleagues; (2) planning thematic units; (3) modifying language tasks based on student proficiency; (4) providing language supports, such as glosses; (5) selecting engaging authentic materials in both print and audiovisual format; (6) offering student choice for assessments; (7) using humor in the target language to build rapport and boost student confidence; and (8) modeling a commitment to overcoming challenges.

The participants in this study highlighted how the ACFTL 21<sup>st</sup> century goals of using authentic resources and target language can be the focus of a classroom aimed at meeting the needs of all learners. These teachers are still evolving and working to improve their classroom practices; however, each teacher seems to be setting the table for students to achieve authentic language learning.

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## Appendix A: Interview protocol

### Background

- (1) Tell me a little about your background: education, teaching, travel.
- (2) In the last several years a lot has changed in world language teaching, specifically with regard to implementing the ACFTL standards. Can you describe your understanding of these changes?
  - (a) How have you dealt with it and how do you like it?

### Authentic Texts

- (1) How do you define "authentic text"?
- (2) Why do you use authentic texts?
- (3) What kinds of texts do you use?
  - (a) What resources do you use to find these texts?
  - (b) How do you determine if a text is suitable for your students', both content and level?
- (4) Do you modify the texts to meet your students' proficiency levels? If so, how do you do this?
  - (a) Since you do not rely solely on a textbook. Does it ever seem like you are reinventing the wheel?
- (5) Describe a typical reading lesson based on authentic reading texts.
- (6) What is your perception of the students' experience while interacting with these texts?

Target Language Use

- (1) How much target language (TL) would you say use with each level?
- (2) How do you build rapport with your students in the TL?
- (3) What sort of things do the students say to each other in the TL?
- (4) What do you do if students seem to be tuning you out?
- (5) How do you deal with students when the previous teacher did not exclusively use TL?
- (6) How do you modify your teacher talk for the various levels of learners?

**Appendix B: Email to participants after initial interview**

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope you had a good weekend! Thanks again for agreeing to do this research project with me.

I am attaching the transcript of the conversation we had a couple of months ago. Please read it over and make any updates, changes of opinion or practice in red.

My deadline for this is October 15th.

Based on your comments, I may have more questions that I will send via email at a later date.

Thank you! Let me know if you have any questions.

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**Appendix C: Follow-up questionnaire via email**

We have already discussed how you make authentic resources accessible to the different levels and how you use teacher talk in the target language. Please be more specific in describing how you differentiate for the following learners:

- 1) IEPs
- 2) 504s
- 3) gifted
- 4) apathetic

# Overcoming Skill-Specific Language Learning Anxiety: Research-Based Tools

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## Abstract

Over the past four decades, the variable of language anxiety in relation to second language acquisition has attracted the attention of second language researchers, teacher educators, and classroom practitioners. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2013) describe language anxiety as reflecting “the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning and using a second language and is especially relevant in a classroom where self-expression takes place” (p. 3). Research has explored how generalized language anxiety can manifest itself in world language classrooms, and consequently, how it can affect student learning and performance. However, emerging research suggests that language anxiety has distinct manifestations and features for each of the four skills specifically (i.e., reading, listening, reading, writing), and that it is more useful to consider them separately (Gkonou, Daubney, & Dewaele, 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). Although these skills do not operate in isolation from one another, researchers have argued that a skill-specific approach is a more useful way of understanding classroom language anxiety, because each skill involves related and distinct anxiety factors (King & Smith, 2017). In this article, the authors explore the theoretical and empirical evidence to date related to skill-specific language anxiety across each of the four skills. Concrete pedagogical activities and interventions are discussed, through which teachers can apply research implications to their classroom contexts in order to help reduce students’ anxiety when communicating in the world language.

*Keywords:* skill-specific language anxiety, classroom language anxiety, instructional strategies

## Introduction

World language study has become common in high schools, colleges, and universities across the U.S., as most have some type of language requirement either for college admission or graduation (American Councils for International Education, 2017; American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2017). Moreover, the National K-12 Foreign Language Report estimates that over 10.6 million students in the formal education system (K-16) nationwide are enrolled in world language courses, so it is no surprise that a significant number of them face challenges, including dealing with language learning anxiety (American Councils for International Education, 2017). Language anxiety has been defined as “the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning and using a second language and is especially relevant in a classroom where self-expression takes place” (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2013, p. 3). Understanding language anxiety is important for world language teachers because the Elementary and Secondary Education Act mandates that teachers must provide all students—regardless of the challenges they may have—with high-quality instruction designed to meet their individual needs (Hardy & Woodcock, 2014; United States Department of Education, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for world language teachers to understand how anxiety may affect student learning and performance. As a result, world language teachers can design and apply appropriate pedagogical interventions to help reduce their students’ anxiety when communicating in the world language.

There has been “an intense growth” of language anxiety research over the past 40 years, making it one of the most studied variables related to individual differences and their influences on the learning process (Prior, 2019, p. 517). Early research on world language classroom anxiety specifically explored how generalized language anxiety can manifest itself in language courses and, consequently, how it may affect student learning outcomes. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) developed the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, one of the first measures of generalized anxiety in the language classroom. Researchers still use this instrument to identify causes of generalized language anxiety and study their relationships with outcomes like course grades, self-perception, and self-concept. However, over time researchers have criticized findings based on the Horwitz et al. (1986), and other similar scales for their methodological limitations, particularly the largely quantitative approaches and the concept of language anxiety as a stable learner construct. They have argued there is a need for dynamic and creative approaches to language anxiety (Gkonou, Daubney, & Dewaele, 2017; Skehan, 1989).

Unlike the early language anxiety studies, which measured generalized anxiety, contemporary studies have “broadened and deepened considerably...and include new theoretical frameworks” (Bigelow, 2019, p. 515). For example, instead of conceptualizing language anxiety as a generalized phenomenon, emerging research has begun to show that language anxiety can be trait based, situation specific, unstable across time, and limited to specific language skills, but not others (Gkonou, et al., 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). Although language skills (i.e., reading, listening, writing, speaking) do not operate in isolation from one another, researchers have argued that a skill-specific approach is a more useful way of understanding classroom language

anxiety, because each skill bears related and distinct anxiety factors (King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017).

In this article, we explore the theoretical constructs and empirical evidence to date related to skill-specific language anxiety across each of the four skills for second language (L2) and world language learners. We provide concrete, researcher-based pedagogical activities and interventions, which align with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning*. Our activities can aid teachers as they work to apply research implications about language anxiety to their own classroom contexts in order to create more inclusive educational experiences in the process.

## Literature review

In this section, we review research related to each of the skill-specific language anxiety constructs, including techniques identified by researchers for reducing anxiety for each skill. We also discuss how ACTFL recommended that world language educators move away from a focus on the four skills to a more integrated, proficiency-oriented approach that focuses on three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational.

### *The writing anxiety construct*

It seems that writing would be the least anxiety-provoking of the four skills, since according to Williams (2012), on a psycholinguistic level it has a slower pace than speaking or listening, leaves an enduring record that can encourage deeper cognitive processing, and provides a platform for learners to utilize their explicit knowledge while planning, monitoring, or reviewing what they have produced. Manchón and Williams (2016) suggest that it is precisely its slower pace that permits learners to reflect on the linguistic and cognitive demands of the task, plan how to meet those demands, draw on a larger number of knowledge sources when carrying out the task, and more closely monitor and edit the written language they produce as a consequence. Nonetheless, while research on world language writing anxiety is still in its infancy, and often relies on first language (L1) writing apprehension studies, writing anxiety clearly negatively affects learners' writing performance (Cheng, 2004; Cornwell & McKay, 1998, 2000; King & Smith, 2017; Leki, 1999; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Torres & Turner, 2016). The small body of research focuses on sources of L2 writing anxiety, correlations between L2 writing anxiety and individual differences, and consequences of L2 writing anxiety in the classroom (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Cornwell and McKay, 2000; Daly & Miller, 1975, Leki, 1999). In terms of sources of L2 writing anxiety, studies indicate that the primary sources among language learners are related to individual variables such as low self-confidence in writing ability, the misconceptions learners have about the purposes of writing, adverse attitudes about writing in an L2, and the fear of being evaluated and judged as a person on the basis of writing tasks (Cheng et al., 1999; Cornwell & McKay, 2000; Daly & Miller, 1975, Leki, 1999). Writing anxiety also can be classroom-specific depending on the degree and type of preparation the writer has to complete a writing task successfully (Leki, 1999).

Negative correlations between L2 writing anxiety and individual differences and have been demonstrated in the literature. For example, several studies

have found motivation, self-perceptions of ability, proficiency level, and course performance to be the four factors with the highest degree of negative correlation with writing anxiety (Takahashi, 2004, 2010). Whereas some researchers (Ewald, 2007; Kitano, 2001) have found that students enrolled in advanced language courses tend to experience more anxiety than those at the beginning levels, Takahashi (2004) suggests that the general weakness in students' language skills in beginning-level courses often leads them to consider writing as "one of the most unpopular, disliked activities in the classroom" (p. 97). Students who are anxious about writing in their L2 take fewer risks in writing and write shorter compositions, which are less straightforward and have longer rambling sentences (Leki, 1999).

Scholarship in the area of L2 writing anxiety is informed by cognitive-rhetorical approaches in L1 composition, which involve the writing process itself (i.e., the cognitive construct) and developing an authorial voice (i.e., the rhetorical construct) (Cheng, 2004). Because the research shows that anxious students tend to focus more on their written products and less on their writing processes, teachers must employ strategies that target the writing process itself. Thus, this perspective involves engaging in all phases of the writing process in the L2 and learning how to use one's L2 to make meaning and create a purposeful authorial voice (Cheng, 2004).

### *The reading anxiety construct*

Reading in the L2 may cause the least amount of anxiety for students of the four skills (King & Smith, 2017; Lee, 1999; Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999). Reading is often a solitary activity, it does not require multiple speakers in order for a learner to make meaning from the input, and it is largely constructed of internal processing capacities unique to each learner (Lee, 1999; Saito et al., 1999). Researchers argue that L2 reading anxiety often manifests itself when learners are inexperienced with different writing systems and cultural materials, and unable to create a sound-symbol correspondence with unfamiliar scripts (Saito et al., 1999). Additionally, anxiety also tends to arise when learners cannot understand nuanced contextual clues present in translations, despite understanding individual words (King & Smith, 2017). Students may not understand contextual clues because they lack certain reading comprehension strategies in their L1 (Grabe, 2012).

The consequences of L2 reading anxiety in the learning processes and performance of students is concerning. Lee (1999) argues that elevated levels of L2 reading anxiety most negatively affect learners' processing capacity, which in turn can influence the way learners derive meaning from a text. Lee (1999) contends that L2 reading anxiety can result in several problems: (1) direct attentional capacity away from reading processes; (2) cause learners to slow down and apply reading processes such as letter or word recognition; and (3) influence readers' decision-making processes, such as decisions about meaning and strategy use. Consequently, when learners have less-than-normal processing capacity available to them, reading processes do not happen automatically or efficiently, which causes learners' comprehension to suffer and renders them unable to create coherent discourse models while they read (Lee, 1999). Furthermore, research

by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991, 1994) demonstrated that high levels of reading anxiety can impact learners' attention spans and reading processes negatively. They found that highly anxious readers process only a few letters at a time, which causes the reading process to be slow, inefficient, and labor intensive. In sum, high levels of L2 reading anxiety can create significant cognitive deficits among highly anxious L2 readers (Lee, 1999; MacIntyre, 1994; Saito et al., 1999)

Lee (1999) argues that teachers' and students' misconceptions about the reading process can lead to increased L2 reading anxiety. Three major misconceptions Lee (1999) found about L2 reading and teaching that tend to heighten anxiety, and thus may cause cognitive processing deficits are: (1) reading is a private act; (2) successful reading equals answering comprehension questions; and (3) reading is a linear process.

### *The listening anxiety construct*

Research has shown that listening is the most frequent skill used in world language classrooms, and it contributes to academic success more than reading or aptitude (Conaway, 1982; Vogely, 1999). It serves as the primary medium through which students receive and process the input to which they are exposed (VanPatten, 2014). Anxiety about listening in an L2, therefore, can cause a breakdown in the learning process at the most fundamental levels (Vogley, 1999). For example, anxious listeners are less effective at processing input, retrieving information, and concentrating on the language they hear (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Kimura, 2008; King & Smith, 2017; Vogley, 1998, 1999). Vogley (1999) goes so far as to argue that "listening-comprehension anxiety can short-circuit the entire language learning process from processing input to producing output" (p. 107).

Researchers have identified several sources of L2 listening anxiety. Vogely (1998), for example, identified four principal sources: (1) the nature of speech samples (e.g., speed of speech, regional dialects, clarity of voice, enunciation, pronunciation); (2) inappropriate or inadequate strategy use while listening; (3) the level of difficulty of a particular listening activity; and (4) a general fear of failure on the part of the student. Similarly, researchers have found other sources of L2 listening anxiety related to learner characteristics specifically, such as emotionality (i.e., experiencing an emotional reaction while listening), confidence to perform adequately, worry about negative evaluation, and anticipatory fear of negative evaluations in the future (Kim, 2000; Kimura 2008, Saito et al., 1999). Interestingly, Kimura's (2008) participants only experienced listening anxiety, which led her to conclude that L2 listening anxiety is a separate phenomenon from generalized language anxiety, and that certain learners may be predisposed to experience only L2 listening anxiety.

Anxious students often find listening particularly challenging because the input may contain unknown vocabulary or syntactic structures. As Vogely (1999) points out, students often feel the solution to their listening difficulties involves slowing or simplifying speech in order to accommodate their proficiency level. However, research suggests that simplification alone is not enough and that students should be encouraged to apply strategies to listening comprehension tasks. Researchers studying L2 listening comprehension have identified three strategies that are



particularly effective: (1) activating students' background knowledge (Anderson, 1985; Phillips, 1984; Vogely, 1999; Young, 1989); (2) helping students use their L1 knowledge (Vogely, 1999; Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994); (3) designing clearly and concisely structured tasks, like structured input activities (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Vogely, 1999).

### *The speaking anxiety construct*

When students experience anxiety in the world language classes, it is most often associated with speaking (Horwitz et al., 1986; Phillips, 1991, 1999; Price, 1991; Young, 1990). Speaking is both the primary means of communication in the classroom and the most likely of the four skills to be used for real-world communication outside of the classroom (King & Smith, 2017). Consequently, researchers have found L2 speaking anxiety to be one of the main components of generalized language anxiety, although it can operate independently as a skill-specific anxiety (Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al. 1986; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). In other words, a learner experiencing generalized language anxiety may experience L2 speaking anxiety, but the opposite may not be true.

Researchers have documented a number of different potential sources of L2 speaking anxiety among learners, many of which are related to fear. For example, in studies conducted both in the U.S. and abroad, many learners reported fear of speaking to teachers because it could lead to negative evaluations by teachers on performance-based evaluations, fear of losing face or performing in front of peers, and fear of making errors while speaking (Ohata, 2005; Woodrow, 2006; Young, 1990). Additionally, researchers have found correlations between speaking anxiety and individual factors related to self-perception and self-concept, such as low self-esteem, low self-worth, and a lack of confidence in one's ability (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Price, 1991; Phillips, 1999; Young, 1990). Teachers are likely to notice a number of negative effects among learners with high anxiety in the classroom. Students may be afraid to speak in class, produce language of less quality and quantity as reflected in the number of dependent clauses and total number of words, volunteer or to participate rarely in oral activities, engage in behavior like skipping class or procrastinating on their homework, avoid personal or difficult messages in the target language, or engage in unnatural turn-taking behaviors, such as unnatural periods of silence or extended silent pausing for linguistic processing (Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002; Clark, 1999; Clark & Wells, 1995; Ely, 1986; Horwitz et al., 1986; Phillips, 1990).

In order to reduce students' speaking anxieties, teachers must foster an environment of collaboration in their classrooms to create a community of learners (Dolan & Hall, 2001; Glisan & Donato, 2017; Phillips, 1999). In these classroom communities, "learning is viewed as a socially situated, collaborative, mutually beneficial process of transformation of both the academic and the social" (Dolan & Hall, 2001, p. 45). Dolan and Hall (2001) cite four main characteristics of effective communities of learners, which they believe are crucial to diminishing students' anxiety to speak in the world language. First, collaborative partner or group activities serve as the core of instruction. However, negotiation of meaning must be taught to ensure group activities are successful at providing feedback.



Second, students are responsible for their individual goals and for negotiating with peers to work toward and share in mutually beneficial achievements. Third, activities are communicative and frequently carried out during regular intervals. This type of repetition of communicative activities helps ease learner anxieties in two ways: they make learners familiar with and secure about task procedures and expectations, and they help learners develop strong interpersonal relationships where they feel safe to make mistakes. Fourth, they use a wide range of discourse participation opportunities, allowing for students to argue, narrate, hypothesize, and offer opinions about topics that are both familiar and new.

*Language anxiety and proficiency-oriented instruction*

On a theoretical level, recent research suggests language anxiety can be skill-specific, situational, unstable across time, and limited to specific language skills but not others (Gkonou, et al., 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). Second language acquisition researchers have investigated language anxiety in relation to the four language skills because for research purposes each skill is its own construct that bears distinct anxiety factors, which thus warrants the examination of each skill separately (King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017). However, within the last decade the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) recommended that world language educators move away from a focus on the four skills to a more integrated, proficiency-oriented approach that focuses on three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. This shift is reflected in ACTFL's (2012b) proficiency guidelines, ACTFL's (2012a) performance descriptors for language learning, the *World-readiness standards for learning languages* (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), and the NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017) can-do proficiency benchmarks.

The three modes of communication serve as a way to organize and describe language use across five ranges of performance: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished. The ACTFL proficiency guidelines were developed originally for assessment of the four skills because they were written before the ACTFL (2012a) performance descriptors for language learning. However, ACTFL's proficiency guidelines consider how "each skill is used, for example, describing both interpersonal and presentational for speaking" (ACTFL, 2012a, p. 7). The authors of the ACTFL (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning* explain,

Performance Descriptors embrace the communicative purpose behind the three modes of communication, describing how a language learner performs to achieve each communicative purpose: interpersonal, interpretive, presentational. The language functions are appropriately matched to the mode of communication. (p. 7)

According to the ACTFL (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning*, interpersonal communication involves the active negotiation of meaning among individuals. Participants observe and monitor one another to see how their meanings and intentions are being communicated so that they can make

adjustments and clarifications accordingly. Interpersonal communication can involve a number of language skills; speaking and listening through conversation, and reading and writing through the use of social media (ACTFL, 2012a). The ACTFL (2012a) *Performance descriptors for language learning* describe interpretive communication as one-way communication with no recourse to the active negotiation of meaning with the writer, speaker, or producer. Rather, it is the interpretation of what the author, speaker, or producer wants the receiver of the message to understand. Interpretation differs from comprehension or translation in that interpretation implies the ability to read (or listen or view) “between the lines,” including understanding subtle nuances or cultural perspectives (ACTFL, 2012a, p. 7). This type of communication can involve reading (pamphlets, websites), listening (voicemails, songs, announcements) or viewing video or other media of authentic materials (ACTFL, 2012a). Presentational communication, as defined by the ACTFL (2012b) *Performance descriptors for language learning*, is one-way communication involving the creation of messages. It is intended to facilitate interpretation if no direct opportunity for the active negotiation of meaning exists. In order to ensure the audience is successful at interpreting the learner’s message, the person presenting needs adequate knowledge about the audience’s languages and cultures. Presentational communication can involve writing (articles, reports), speaking (telling a story, giving a speech) or visually presenting (digital storytelling or PowerPoint) (ACTFL, 2012a).

The NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017) *Can-do proficiency benchmarks* serve a dual purpose for contemporary world language educators. On the one hand, the benchmarks can guide teachers to create the necessary conditions for learning and design appropriate performance tasks according to their students’ proficiency range, while still pushing their language development forward to the next range. On the other hand, the benchmarks help teachers develop realistic expectations for summative assessments because they provide a rich description of a range of what learners can do with the language.

### **Anxiety-reducing pedagogical strategies and interventions for world language classrooms**

In this section, we offer concrete pedagogical strategies and interventions based on the body of skill-specific language anxiety research to date. These strategies and interventions can guide teachers as they work to apply research implications related to language anxiety to their classroom contexts in order to create more inclusive educational experiences for students. Although we discuss the targeted proficiency levels and modes of communication with the NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017) *Can-do proficiency benchmarks* in mind, the suggested activities and strategies can be adapted to engage multiple modes of communication for students of varying proficiency levels. Examples are provided in English to facilitate understanding for all readers, but the expectation is to maximize target language use when developing materials, and designing and implementing activities.

#### *Strategies for targeting the interpersonal mode of communication*

Interpersonal communication is a two-way exchange where learners actively negotiate meaning with one another. This mode of communication consists of

spontaneous and unpredictable language, which arises as learners work to make meaning of one another's messages and intentions (ACTFL, 2012b). Two types of speaking activities that are found typically in effective communities of learners, which are aimed at lessening L2 speaking anxiety and promote speaking proficiency, are Prelude to conversation activities (Thompson, 2005) and situational role-play activities.

**Prelude to conversation activities.** Developed by Thompson (2005), Prelude to conversation is a pre-speaking activity that allows learners to focus on both form and content before speaking. These activities have been found to have a profound impact on proficiency development (Thompson, 2005). As the name suggests, pre-speaking activities occur before learners engage in a speaking task, whether it be in the interpersonal mode or presentational mode. Students are responsible for brainstorming, with one another, the content and language forms they will need to carry out the subsequent speaking task. The role of the instructor is to ask questions that generate ideas about content relevant to the task and to draw students' attention to relevant grammatical forms, vocabulary, and elaboration strategies. The teacher classifies the ideas generated by the students as content and form related, recording this information on the board in two columns, *Content* and *Form*. Prelude to conversation activities help learners plan and organize task-relevant information, and they have been shown to increase the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of students' subsequent spoken discourse (Gaillard, 2013).

In the sample speaking task (Activity A), students imagine that they call their favorite TV cooking show host to get advice from the chef about planning a meal for a family reunion that will include guests who have different food allergies. This particular example is designed for Advanced-level students, but Prelude to conversation activities can be adapted for students of varying proficiency levels.

The teacher displays the graphic organizer on the board (Figure 1), and then guides the students to generate ideas related to both the content and forms related to this task. For example, related to content, students will need vocabulary related to dietary restrictions, kinship terms for the family members who will be present, and the words for dishes and their respective ingredients. In terms of forms, students will need language to request suggestions from the chef (e.g., conditional tense); to receive or make a recommendation (e.g., subjunctive tense), and when making detailed descriptions of the meals that will be prepared, they may need to monitor noun-adjective agreement.

#### **Activity A. Prelude to conversation activity—Family reunion**

You are going to be having a family reunion next week, and for the first time you will be hosting the event at your house. You will be responsible for preparing dinner. You need some help because some of the guests have dietary restrictions. Your favorite daytime TV chef takes calls during her show, and you want to call in to ask for advice on planning the meal. On her website, she has a guide to help callers prepare what they want to ask. As a class, brainstorm what you will say and how you will say it.

Figure 1: *Graphic Organizer for Prelude to Conversation Activity*

Content	Communicative Functions/ Forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dietary restrictions: what people cannot eat</li><li>• Relationships of the people present (e.g., brother, aunt, grandmother)</li><li>• Vocabulary for food items and dishes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Request information, interrogative forms</li><li>• Ask for recommendations, subjunctive</li><li>• Descriptions, noun–adjective agreement</li></ul>

Research has demonstrated that teacher-led pre-speaking activities, such as Prelude to conversation tasks, increase the quality of students’ output and reduce their L2 speaking anxiety (Gaillard, 2013; Thompson, 2005). In particular, Gaillard (2013) hypothesizes that there are several features of these activities that aid anxious students. She believes students’ anxiety is lowered because (1) they are able to ask questions about the task during the brainstorming phase to ensure they understand the requirements; (2) their background knowledge is activated in preparation for speaking; (3) they can generate and organize ideas; and (4) they can focus their attention on forms needed for the activity.

**Situational role-play activities.** In situational role-play activities, learners use their meaning-making resources to take on roles and act them out in real-life situations. In some cases, they may be asked to take on roles that are familiar to them outside the classroom, such as a customer in a restaurant. In other cases, the roles may be new experiences, like those of a doctor or a customer service representative. In terms of language learning benefits, situational role-play activities provide a platform for learners to develop a sensitivity to context by considering the characteristics of a situation and the roles of the people involved in the conversational exchange (Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018). Thus, by offering a close approximation of the conditions in which language is used in context, these activities focus learners’ attention not just on their messages, but also on conveying their messages in pragmatically appropriate ways (Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018). Learners experiencing L2 speaking anxiety may benefit particularly from these role-play activities, because as Dolan & Hall (2001) argues, the consequences of such play are likely to be nonthreatening or inconsequential, and they give learners opportunities to try out different voices or take on new social identities. Role plays can be carried out effectively at any proficiency level, and can be an effective way for learners to practice vocabulary, a grammatical form, or communicative function related to a particular theme.

For situational role plays to be effective and enjoyable for students at different proficiency levels, a varying degree of pre-task scaffolding may be needed (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). In Activity B, we provide an example of a situational role play for Novice-level learners, which involves a phone conversation between two friends. This activity was adapted from Guzmán, Lapuerta & Liskin–Gasparro (2020), which contains an abundance of situational role play activities that can be adapted for different languages and proficiency levels.

<b>Activity B. Situational role play—An international roommate</b> (adapted from Guzmán et al., 2020, p. 55)	
<b>Role A</b>	<b>Role B</b>
<p>Your best friend calls you to tell you that they have a new roommate who is an international student. After you greet your friend, ask:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where your friend's new roommate is from.</li> <li>2. What they are like physically.</li> <li>3. What they like to do in their free time.</li> <li>4. What they study at your university.</li> </ol>	<p>You call your best friend to talk about your new international roommate. Your friend asks a lot of questions. Answer their questions in as much detail as possible.</p>

Teachers can use a pre-task graphic organizer during the planning phase to scaffold learners' subsequent role-play performances to discuss the context of the situation and whether a formal or informal language register is required (Figure 2). Together with the students, the teacher can brainstorm key language functions, grammatical structures, vocabulary, and content that learners will need to include in their role plays to accomplish the task successfully. For this example, the key language functions and forms related to the informal context of this activity are asking questions and giving information, talking about origin, talking about hobbies, and employing noun–adjective agreement and the present tense. Essential vocabulary in order to carry out this situational role play includes adjectives of nationality, adjectives to describe people, school subjects, hobbies, and question words. With the learners, the teacher also can explore programmatically appropriate ways to start and end their conversations, like using the informal *tú* [you] in Spanish when talking to a friend.

**Figure 2.** *Pre-Task Graphic Organizer for Situational Role Plays*

Context	Key grammatical structures	Key vocabulary
Register <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal</li> <li>• Formal</li> </ul>		
Key content to accomplish the task	How to start the conversation	How to end the conversation

By using graphic organizers for Prelude to conversation activities and situational role-play activities, there is potential to lower students' speaking anxiety. Students can refer to the information generated during the planning phase as they are performing the task. Additionally, students can anticipate how to carry out communicative functions, such as starting and ending a conversation in a situationally appropriate manner.

*Strategies for targeting the interpretive mode of communication*

Interpretive communication involves the interpretation of a message, an understanding of the creator's cultural mindset or perspective, and reading and listening skills. In the following section, we suggest research-based pedagogical interventions that are designed to reduce anxiety related to the interpretive mode, which include social reading software, scaffolded tasks, and reading-readiness activities.

**Digital-social reading tools.** Digital-social reading tools are designed to make the reading process a collaborative act (Thoms & Poole, 2017). Rather than take notes in the margins of a text, groups of learners can annotate the same online text, and thus share their annotations with one another. These tools allow learners to share their reactions in real time and work together to pool their knowledge to build a collective body of commentary about a text. *eComma* is an example of a free digital-social reading tool that was created for use in L2 classrooms by The Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning at the University of Texas–Austin (COERLL, 2020). The developers suggest that teachers and learners use it to: (1) create and use word clouds to analyze meaning in a text; (2) leave annotations and other marks in the text; (3) create digital tags to help organize, classify, or track information; and (4) use analytics to discover students' meaning-making patterns both during and after they read a text (COERLL, 2020). Emerging research about the use of digital-social reading tools in L2 classrooms suggests they lead to increased cognitive and social engagement among learners, and also offer a way to for learners to engage in interpersonal communication in the target language (Michelson & Dupuy, 2018; Thoms & Poole, 2017, 2018).

In Activity C (next page), we show an example of how a digital-social reading tool can be used to facilitate Advanced-level students' understanding of *Platero y yo* [Platero and I] by Juan Ramón Jiménez. This activity is adapted from Bleichmar and Cañón (2012) and is part of a larger unit on the descriptive genre, which culminates with students writing a descriptive essay of their own. In this activity, students use the tools of *eComma* to annotate, tag, and comment on the text collaboratively while they read. These tools can be used to guide students' attention to particular literary devices and effective descriptions, or they can be used to show common parts of a text that may be difficult for them to understand. Additionally, students can scaffold one another's understanding by leaving their own questions on the text, as well as responding to the questions or comments of their peers.

**Sequenced reading tasks and reading-readiness activities.** Researchers have argued that one of the keys to reducing L2 reading anxiety is to structure readers' interaction with a text in a way that breaks the task down into several guided steps (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Phillips, 1999; Swaffer, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991). Additionally, to decrease anxiety with reading tasks, teachers can activate learners' prior knowledge about the content of a text and preparing them to carry out an activity before they begin. Thus, creating reading-readiness activities may involve having learners brainstorm; use para-textual elements, such as titles, subtitles, headings, charts, and illustrations; recall their prior knowledge related to text content; scan for specific information or key words; and anticipate the content

**Activity C. Digital-social reading tools** (adapted from Bleichmar & Cañón, 2012, p. 6)

Instructions: Read *Platero y yo* [Platero and I] by Juan Ramón Jiménez (in *eComma*) and answer the questions below. Your comments will be graded. Remember that you must make at least one comment on each of the poems by Tuesday at 11:59 pm and respond to someone else's comments by 11:59 pm on Thursday. Remember to highlight any words or phrases that interfere with your understanding of the text.

1. Some descriptions in *Platero y yo* are simple and concrete, while others rely on analogies, metaphors, or comparisons. First, tag one example each of an analogy, a metaphor, and a comparison. Then, choose three different descriptions that seem particularly effective to you and leave a comment explaining why you feel that way.
2. The narrator never describes himself/herself, but we can tell a lot about him/her through his/her observations, descriptions, and reactions. Describe the narrator using three different adjectives and tag the parts of the text we can observe these parts of his character.
3. After you have finished reading, identify what you think the moral of the poems is and leave a comment explaining why.

of the text before they actually start reading (Lee, 1999; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Omaggio Hadley, 2001).

For example, Activity D (next page) is designed for Intermediate-level students and is based on a text about art movements in Mexico in the 1920s. The task is made up of several smaller tasks that scaffold students' performance before, during, and after reading. It involves a reading-readiness phase that asks students to use their background knowledge as they examine the title and subtitles to anticipate the content of the text before reading.

**Sequenced listening tasks.** Activity E is an example of an Intermediate-level task that facilitates interpretive communication and incorporates strategies to lower learner anxiety by helping them focus on specific features (e.g., when the events were happening) of the input they receive. First, students are asked to brainstorm how the task relates to a real-world situation with which they may be familiar (e.g., festival information). Second, they are guided to key words or phrases that will be essential to their understanding during the task (e.g., time-related words). Third, students' attention is directed to features related to tense (e.g., past, present, future), which allows them to devote their attentional resources to receiving and processing the message to which they are exposed (Lee, 1999). Lastly, the activity is structured in a way that breaks the tasks into manageable steps, from which anxious learners in particular will benefit.



**Activity D. Sequenced tasks and reading-readiness activities—Art movements of Mexico in the 1920s**

*Before reading:* Read the title and subtitles of “*Los movimientos artísticos en México en los años 20*” [“Artistic Movements in Mexico in the 1920s”] (Appendix A, written by second author Madi Seigler). Then, with a partner discuss the following questions and explain your answers.

1. What information do you hope to learn from this article?
  - a. Titles: Subtitles:
2. What do you already know about magical realism and muralism?
3. What do you know about what was going on in Mexico in the '20s, for example, political movements?
4. Make a list of Mexican artists that you know. Who do you like most? What kind of art did they make?

*While you read:* Read the article “*Los movimientos artísticos en México en los años 20.*” Then connect the sentences on the left with the correct answers.

1. The art movement that depicts real life with strange symbols and imagery.	A. Muralism
2. The artist who painted self-portraits to represent disability, love, and death in the magical realist style.	B. Diego Rivera
3. The movement in which the artists painted art works in public spaces to show their political opinions.	C. Magical Realism
4. They painted murals in Mexico City about the economic system during and after the Mexican Revolution.	D. Frida Kahlo

*Extension:* With a partner, search the Internet for a piece of artwork by Frida Kahlo or Diego Rivera. Complete the graphic organizer with information about these pieces of artwork. Use the information that you have found and discussed to present your artwork to the class.

	Name of the artwork	Description (like colors, people, significance)	Elements of the artistic movement (e.g., magic realism or muralism) reflected in the piece
Frida Kahlo			
Diego Rivera			



**Activity E. Sequenced listening activity—The national festival of Chamamé** (Spanish and English versions of the script used are available in Appendix B)

*Step 1.* The National Festival of Chamamé is an annual festival in Corrientes, Argentina to celebrate the music, folklore, and culture of Argentina and surrounding countries. The festival is this weekend. Listen to the schedule for the National Festival Chamamé. For each event, indicate if it refers to Friday, (F), Saturday (Sa), or Sunday (Su) on the blank *before* the event name.

	Day of the week	Event	Last night? Today? Tomorrow?
1.		Dance by the National Ballet of Argentina.	
2.		Song by Florencia de Pomper.	
3.		Performance by Tupa Noy.	
4.		Screening of a film about the festival.	
5.		Opening of an art gallery about Argentina.	

*Step 2.* We will now listen to the schedule a second time. Add an appropriate time-related word from the list below in the blank after the event name.

- Model: Yesterday, they sang after the intermission.
- Last night...
- Today...
- Tomorrow morning...

*Strategies for targeting the presentational mode of communication*

The presentational mode of communication is a one-way form of communication, where learners create a message for an intended audience through writing or speaking. Because there is no direct opportunity for negotiation of meaning, learners need some knowledge of the audience's perspective in order to facilitate the interpretation of their intended message (ACTFL, 2012b). Three strategies that researchers have identified as useful for students experiencing language anxiety during presentational communication are freewriting, written peer corrective feedback, and scaffolded writing tasks (Leki, 1999; Listyani, 2018).

**Freewriting.** Many anxious learners tend to have trouble at the beginning of a writing task and often struggle to find the right words or phrases as they work

to complete it (Leki, 1999). Freewriting is a type of low-stakes writing task that involves learners writing everything they can about a topic without stopping for a set period of time, usually between 10 and 15 minutes. Students can write a large amount of content without worrying about accuracy or structure. Whether students write by hand, or type on their devices, this technique increases the flow and number of ideas generated and can increase written fluency as a consequence of writing without pause (Elbow, 1973; Gill, 2006). Research suggests that the type of writing prompts that work effectively with anxious students are those which allow for learners to use their own experiences or preferences to decide what to write about within the broad topic suggested by each prompt (Leki, 1999). The following three examples of freewriting prompts are targeted toward Intermediate-level students.

1. Think of a trend that is popular right now that you don't like, for example, a dance, fashion style, or type of music. What do you like or dislike about it? Why do you think others like it? What do you think should be popular instead?
2. Take 10 minutes to think about all of the hobbies. Pick one to write about. What do you know about the history of it, the processes of making it or participating in it, current leagues or clubs related to it, etc. Next, choose your favorite hobby and write as much as you can about it.
3. Pick an event that you remember vividly, like your first day at the university, or a time when you came to the defense of someone who was being bullied. Do not feel limited by these two ideas—they are just examples to start your thinking process. Write down as many memories as you can from this event, including how you felt, what you did, who was involved, etc. Include the tiniest details you can remember, like clothes you wore or the colors of the walls.

These prompts are relevant to students' lives because they relate to concrete themes or events that students likely have experienced. They may make students less anxious because they ask them to use their prior experiences or opinions as tools for successfully carrying out the task (Leki, 1999).

**Peer revision.** Peer revision involves students working together to review and give feedback on one another's drafts. While it is interpersonal in nature, the goal is for students to create a final product that enhances their presentational communication. With this technique, "the teacher no longer needs to play the anxiety-producing role of judge of the student's abilities; instead...[the teacher] places the student comfortably in the hands of a supportive collaborator" (Leki, 1999, pp. 77–78). However, there is evidence to suggest that students may not value peer feedback or take it seriously because they do not see their peers as qualified substitutes for their teachers unless the teacher teaches them peer editing strategies explicitly (Rollinson, 2005). Rollinson (2005) believes peer review training should include: (1) an awareness-raising phase, which involves discussing the value and purpose of peer feedback; (2) a productive group interaction phase, where teachers model the etiquette of collaboration; and (3) a productive response and revision phase, where students learn basic revision procedures and effective commenting.

During a unit in which Advanced-level learners compose a narrative essay about a memorable event they experienced during a trip, teachers could use our peer feedback template (Appendix C). The template identifies the five required components of the essay: introduction, actions, descriptions, dialogue, and conclusion, and it breaks them down into manageable parts to guide students in the writing process. At the end of the template, students focus on conventions and note any errors they find in their partners' drafts or instances where they might be unsure about language use. The language-oriented suggestion comes at the end and is downplayed to make the point that this peer feedback template is designed to help students focus on content and organization, and only minimally on language errors. The template also includes a reflective component that prompts students to reflect on what parts of their partner's comments helped them the most as they wrote their final drafts, as well as what revisions they made between their first and final drafts and why they made them. Nassaji and Kartchava (2017) argue that although peer training is important, in order for peer collaborative feedback to be most effective, it has to be scaffolded and content focused.

**Scaffolded writing tasks.** Instead of presenting students with a traditional writing task, and asking students to complete it, anxious students may benefit from the teacher scaffolding the task into more manageable chunks (Leki, 1999; Listyani, 2018). Teachers need to assess students' performance levels and task complexity when considering the amount and the explicitness of the scaffolding they offer students (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). For example, Novice and Intermediate-level students' performance may benefit from ample, direct scaffolding, while Advanced and Superior-level students may require less and more indirect scaffolding to carry out a task successfully (Gaillard, 2013). In the Activity F (next page), Novice-level learners are asked to create a tutoring advertisement to post on their school's social media page. The task involves students creating an advertisement for a tutor while they study abroad. First, as a pre-task, students break down the elements of a tutoring advertisement, including the personality of the tutor they are looking for, their availability, more information about the areas in which they need tutoring and why, and how much they can afford to pay. Using this scaffolded information as a base, they then use this information to write their advertisement. As a follow up, they compare advertisements with a peer and decide whether or not they would be capable of tutoring them.

Anxious students are often so focused on their written products that they neglect to understand the processes they used to compose them (Leki, 1999). Scaffolded writing activities like Activity F are designed to reduce students' anxiety directly by breaking down the task into manageable chunks, and indirectly by making the relationship between the quality of students' writing processes and the quality of their final products more explicit (Leki, 1999; Listyani, 2018).

## Conclusion

Language anxiety affects world language students' learning processes and their in-class performance. Until recently, language anxiety was conceived of as a generalized personality trait activated in response to particular situations where

**Activity F. Scaffolded writing task—Creating an advertisement for a tutor**

*Step 1.* You moved to Peru a month ago for study abroad. In most of your classes, you are succeeding but in one you are really struggling. You will be writing a Help Wanted advertisement for a tutor in the subject and, specifically, the concepts with which you are struggling. Before writing, fill out the graphic organizer to help you prepare for the task.

Personality traits of a good tutor	<i>Ex: a patient person</i> 1. 2. 3.
Days and hours you are available	<i>Ex: Monday and Friday; 3-5</i> Days: Time:
Which class and topic you are having trouble with	<i>Ex: Spanish class, I don't understand the difference between an indirect and direct object</i> Course: Theme:
Why you need a tutor	<i>Ex: I am looking for someone to help me understand grammar and to practice speaking with</i>
How much you can pay per hour	

*Step 2.* Once you have filled out the graphic organizer, write your advertisement. Include the information from the graphic organizer, as well as other information that will help the tutor. After you have finished writing your advertisement, exchange your work with a partner. Would you be able to tutor your partner? Write two reasons why you would or would not be a good tutor for your partner. Be prepared to share with the class.

students have to process or produce language (Kormos, 2016). However, emerging research demonstrates that anxiety in world language classrooms is much more complex. Language anxiety can be situational, unstable across time or proficiency level, and limited to particular language skills and not others (King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). This insight has led researchers to call for studies that examine the dynamic relationship between anxiety in world language classrooms and each of the four skills. This more nuanced understanding of language anxiety recognizes that each skill may be the site of both related and distinct anxiety factors, which in turn can affect learning outcomes in different ways (Gkonou et al., 2017; King & Smith, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017).

Recent trends in world language education highlight the importance of creating more inclusive classrooms for language learners with specific learning challenges,

such as those experiencing skill-specific language anxiety. However, despite the call for studies on inclusive language teaching practices, researchers cite a lack of concrete pedagogical practices that enhance the language learning opportunities for these students in the literature (Kormos, 2016; Wight, 2015). One of the most prominent themes that emerges from the research is the pedagogical suggestion to focus on language learning processes rather than on products. The implication, then, is that teachers design multi-stage activities in which students' performance is scaffolded before, during, and after the central task of the activity. This may involve, for example, modeling performance of the task, breaking the task down into various steps, activating learners' background knowledge, or helping learners plan for the task before they actually perform it.

Another important overarching anxiety-reducing theme is the value of a classroom community that promotes dialogic interaction among learners. At their core, these types of classrooms promote collaboration, encourage peers to form strong interpersonal relationships and to help others work toward their goals, and foster the familiarity and security about classroom expectations that anxious students seek.

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### **Appendix A: Readings related to Activity D. Sequenced tasks and reading-readiness activities**

Los movimientos artísticos en México en los años 20 (Spanish version)

Madi Seigler

#### *El arte mexicano*

En los años 20 el arte en México floreció. Todavía se ve la influencia de los estilos europeos, pero empezaba a incorporar temas de los indígenas y la identidad mexicana. En esta época, durante y directamente después de la revolución mexicana, hubo un aumento de enfoque en dos temas: las experiencias de uno mismo y de su grupo. Las representaciones artísticas de estos temas fueron el realismo mágico y el muralismo. En este artículo, vamos a explorar estos movimientos y los artistas más famosos para entender más las perspectivas de la gente mexicana en los años 20.

#### *El realismo mágico*

El realismo mágico fue un movimiento para demostrar la rareza de la vida cotidiana. Los artistas pintaban la vida real con figuras realistas, pero en situaciones extrañas. Los temas no eran críticas de la sociedad, eran exploraciones de la cultura y de la experiencia humana. El realismo mágico se ha comparado con el surrealismo, pero a diferencia de ello, este movimiento se enfocaba en las observaciones más que en los sueños y la consciencia. Una artista famosa de esta época fue Frida Kahlo por sus autorretratos. Representaban la vida, la muerte, el amor y la vida con discapacidades.

#### *El muralismo*

Después de la revolución mexicana, los muralistas resurgieron para unir la nación. Un mural es una pintura en un muro. Históricamente las bellas artes sólo eran para los ricos, pero los murales estaban en edificios públicos que todos podían ver. Los artistas pintaban sobre la política, la identidad, la opresión y la resistencia; de esos murales se formaban las opiniones del público y ayudaba a decidir cuáles

problemas necesitaban ser cambiados. Unos de esos problemas era el sistema económico, lo cual era un tema del que Diego Rivera, el muralista más famoso, pintaba mucho. Todavía se pueden ver sus obras en la Ciudad de México.

### Artistic Movements in Mexico in the 1920s (English translation)

Madi Seigler

#### *Mexican Art*

In the 20s art in Mexico flourished. Artists were still influenced by European styles but were beginning to incorporate themes from indigenous people and the Mexican identity. At this time, during and directly after the Mexican Revolution, there was a rise in focus in two themes: the experiences of yourself and of your group. The artistic representations of these themes were magical realism and muralism. In this article, we're going to explore these movements and the most famous artists in order to understand more perspectives of the Mexican people in the 20's.

#### *Magical Realism*

Magical realism was a movement to show the strangeness of daily life. The artists painted real life with realistic figures, but in strange situations. The themes weren't criticisms of society, they were explorations of culture and the experiences of humankind. Magical realism was compared to surrealism, but unlike that movement, this movement was focused in observations more than dreams and the unconscious. A famous artist from this time was Frida Kahlo for herself portraits. They represented live, death, live, and life with disabilities.

#### *Muralism*

After the Mexican Revolution, muralists resurged to untie the nation. A mural is a painting on a wall. Historically, the fine arts were only for the rich, but murals were in public places so all could see them. Artists painted about politics, identity, oppression, and resistance; these murals formed the opinions of the public and helped them decide which problems needed to be changed. One of these problems was the economic system, a subject that Diego Rivera, the most famous muralist, painted about a lot. You can still his works in Mexico City.

### **Appendix B: Scripts related to Activity E. Sequenced listening activity** (written by Madi Seigler)

La Fiesta Nacional de Chamamé es este fin de semana. Estoy aquí con mis amigos y estoy emocionado por ver todo. El festival empezó anoche con una canción de Tupa Noy, un grupo que toca música folklórica. También anoche, mi amiga trabajó en la galería de arte. Hay una pintura famosa que quería ver, pero no entré porque había demasiada gente en el lugar. La primera noche fue increíble. Esta mañana vamos a ver el baile del Ballet Nacional, y yo quiero desayunar antes de salir. También hoy, Florencia de Pomper, una cantante súper famosa, canta en el escenario principal. Mañana por la mañana veremos el estreno de una película sobre el festival y la ceremonia de clausura. ¡Va a ser muy divertido!

The national festival of Chamamé is this weekend. I'm here with my friends and I'm excited to see everything. Yesterday, the festival began with a song by Tupa Noy, a group that plays folkloric music. Last night as well, my friend worked in the art gallery. There is a famous painting that I wanted to see, but I didn't go in because there were too many people inside. The first night was incredible. This morning we are going to see a dance by the National Ballet, and I want to eat before going. Today as well, Florencia de Pomper, a super famous Singer, sings at the main stage. Tomorrow morning, we will see a showing of a movie about the festival and the closing ceremony. It's going to be so fun!

### Appendix C: Peer feedback template

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Please read your partner's draft carefully and make helpful and informative comments on the content, organization, and logic of the story. Also, think about how you can analyze your draft in the same way as your partner's to make substantive revisions for the final version.

Read your partner's draft carefully and then answer the questions.

#### 1. Introduction.

- a. What is the **topic** of the narrative? Use your own words. It should be a phrase (e.g., an accident during a trip to Florida, the scariest moment of X's life).
- b. What is the **thesis**? Again, use your own words. Express the thesis as one complete sentence (e.g., One can learn a lot from negative events).
- c. Where does the story take place? When? What else about the context do you learn from the introduction?
- d. Make at least two meaningful, substantive suggestions to improve the introduction.
  - 1.
  - 2.

#### 2. Actions.

- a. Is there a clear story line in chronological order? (Be careful: Pay attention only to the main events; you will comment on the descriptive parts later.) Write your comments about the story line (main events) on your partner's paper, but summarize them here also. Make suggestions to improve the sequencing and the logic of the events.

- b. Are the actions/events that led up to the main event of the story presented in enough detail to create suspense or make the story interesting? Give one or two examples of detailed actions that show the how the action of the story is unfolding before arriving at the main event.
    - 1.
    - 2.
  - c. Look at the verbs in the sentences that recount the main story line and push the narrative forward in time. Are they in the preterit tense? Underline verbs that you think should be in the preterit tense but are not, and write “Pret?” above them to draw the writer’s attention to them.
3. Descriptions.
- a. Give examples of detailed descriptions ...
    1. of the characters in the story.
    2. of the setting in terms of time (i.e., when the story takes place).
    3. of the setting in terms of space (i.e., where the story takes place).
  - b. Give your partner one or two suggestions to improve his/her descriptions.
  - c. Where there are sentences that provide description but do not advance the actions of the story in time, look at the verbs. Are they in the imperfect? Underline verbs that you think should be in the imperfect but are not, and write “Imp?” above them to draw the writer’s attention to them.
4. Dialogue
- a. Is there dialogue in your partner’s draft? If there is dialogue, what does it contribute to the story? (Be specific.)
  - b. If there is dialogue, give your partner one or two suggestions to increase the impact of the dialogue.
    - 1.
    - 2.
  - c. If there is no dialogue in the draft, suggest to your partner where he/she might put in some dialogue and how it would improve the story.
4. Conclusion.
- a. Is the thesis presented (or repeated) in the conclusion? Underline the sentence in the conclusion that restates the thesis, and write **Thesis** next to it. If you cannot find the thesis statement, explain the problem here.
  - b. After you have finished reading your partner’s draft, and have thought about it by answering these questions, are you finding loose ends, parts that are not clear or where something seems to be left out (e.g., lack of logic, important events left out, you can’t understand why a character did something)? Explain the problems below.
5. Language check. If you have time, read the story again and look for basic errors, like agreement errors between subject and verb, or between noun and adjective, and errors in noun gender (*el/la*). Then underline all of the preterit/imperfect verbs and circle any you think may be incorrect.
-

Note to the writer of the rough draft: Use the space below to write your assessment of your partner's comments on your draft and your revision process (rough draft to final version).

- (a) What parts of your partner's comments helped you the most when you revised your draft?
- (b) What changes did you make from the draft to the final version? Why did you make those changes?

This activity was created by Dr. Judith Liskin-Gasparro and was used in her Spanish Writing Course at the University of Iowa. Adapted and reprinted with her permission.

# The Untapped Potential of Academic Language in World Language Classrooms

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## Abstract

It is hopeful that world language educators aim to prepare learners to use the target language in the real world to communicate successfully in common educational, professional, and social settings. In order to function in such contexts, learners need access to advanced levels of proficiency, which can be possible through learning academic language—the vocabulary, linguistic structures, and ways of communicating found in the topics, texts, genres, and rhetorical patterns of professional and academic settings. In this article, the authors define academic language and review how the construct has been addressed in world language education. Possible explanations for the lack of explicit attention to academic language in traditional world language classroom contexts are explored, and several practical pedagogical strategies are provided for integrating academic language in world language classrooms. The authors suggest that purposeful integration of academic language into world language curriculum and instruction is one promising option for providing equity and access for all students.

*Keywords:* academic language, contextualized language instruction, literacy, equity, proficiency

## Introduction

World language (WL) education provides access to a larger world that includes unique perspectives and worldviews of other cultures and communities, which in

turn enables access to alternative ways of being and doing. From a more pragmatic perspective, “Literacy grants power in any civilization” (Freed, 2003, p. 1). Access to education, academic content, and economic opportunities depends heavily on the ability to use language in particular contexts and for specific purposes. To this end, WL education aims to prepare world-ready learners capable of communicating effectively in educational and professional settings. Beyond casual and social interaction, professionals must read informational texts, think critically about abstract ideas and complex topics, and discuss global and social issues in sophisticated ways (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). All of these tasks depend on a professional’s ability to work with academic content from various fields, such as business, science, and technology. These professional tasks also generally involve uses of language that differ from that of daily domestic and social tasks. This kind of language is known as academic language (AL), and we believe it is a key component in developing higher levels of language proficiency.

In this article, we argue that WL teachers should explicitly teach and intentionally develop students’ AL skills in the target language. We first define AL and explain its integral role in proficiency development. Then, we discuss the role AL plays in related fields and offer several possible explanations for the lack of attention to its development in WL education. Next, we propose several pedagogical strategies for integrating AL into the WL classroom. Lastly, we conclude by arguing that AL is the language of power, and when teachers explicitly teach it, they promote proficiency development in ways that make room for all learners at the proverbial table.

### **Defining academic language and its functions**

One of the primary goals of U.S. WL education is to aid learners in communicating and collaborating proficiently for a range of purposes across a variety of global, cross-cultural contexts and professional settings (Moeller & Abbott, 2018; The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Although the contexts and tasks in professional fields, such as customer service, information technology, marketing, management, and sales may vary, the communicative demands they make of employees are similar (ACTFL, 2019). For instance, professionals working in each of these areas frequently complete the following tasks while at work: (1) read informational texts about business, economics, politics, science, and technology; (2) participate in meetings and conference calls; (3) generate formal and informal correspondence (e.g., reports and emails); and (4) give professional presentations (Knoch, May, Macqueen, Pill, & Storch, 2016; Marina, Yakusheva, & Demchenkova, 2019; Oliveri & Tannenbaum, 2019). These kinds of professional tasks require employees to discuss “topics related to employment, current events, and matters of public and community interest” (ACTFL, 2012, p. 6). Such topics evoke abstract ideas and conceptually dense, academic content that is more cognitively complex than the concrete objects and places of most people’s daily lives (Snow, 2008; Stroupe, 2013). They also demand that employees use disciplinary content to explain complex processes, hypothesize, evaluate alternatives, offer meaningful recommendations, and make effective



decisions (Gao, Gao, & Yang, 2017). Such tasks also require well-developed critical thinking skills (Stroupe, 2013). Consequently, as the NCSSFL-ACTFL *Can-do statements* (2017) illustrate, as one's language proficiency and corresponding participation in professional settings increases, the ability to organize, explain, and discuss academic content plays an increasingly important role (ACTFL, 2017; Meneses, Uccelli, Santelices, Ruiz, Acevedo, & Figueroa, 2018; Uccelli, Barr, Phillips Galloway, Meneses, & Dobbs, 2015; Uccelli & Phillips Galloway, 2017).

In academic and professional settings, this convergence of professional context, cognitively demanding disciplinary content, and critical thinking tasks result in a unique set of identifiable language patterns, organizational strategies, and rhetorical devices (Briceño, 2015; Meneses et al., 2018; Uccelli & Phillips Galloway, 2017). These patterns are reflected in the ACTFL (2012) Proficiency Guidelines in descriptors such as "provide a structured argument," separate "main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic, lexical, and phonetic devices," and "combine and link sentences into connected discourse" (p. 6). These specialized discourse patterns diverge from the typical language used for everyday interactions, and are known collectively as academic language (Heppt, Haag, Böhm, & Stanat, 2015; Zwiers, 2007; Zwiers, 2014).

According to Zwiers (2014), AL is comprised of "the set of words and phrases that 1) describe content-area knowledge and procedures, 2) express complex thinking processes and abstract concepts, and 3) create cohesion and clarity in written and oral discourse" (p. 60). Many instances of both oral and written AL share characteristics that make it easy to distinguish from other types of language. The language that friends use when chatting about weekend plans is more informal and uses concrete, familiar vocabulary, whereas the language needed to debate the merits of public policy tends to be marked by more formal, sophisticated uses of language, complex grammatical constructions, abstract conceptual expression, and technical vocabulary (DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker, & Rivera, 2014). Topics of conversation in professional settings tend to be more abstract, or "context-reduced," and individual sentences tend to be longer and more complex (Zwiers, 2007, p. 94). This is due, in part, to the fact that AL is often-used to articulate both content and "thinking about disciplinary content" (Nagy & Townsend, 2012, p. 92). Consequently, professionals in different fields employ discipline-specific rhetorical strategies and organizational devices to frame and structure their professional communication (Byrnes, 2002). Ideas are usually organized and communicated according to specific genre-based conventions, while relationships between various ideas are explicitly conveyed through a variety of conjunctions and transitional words and phrases (Byrnes, 2002; DiCerbo et al., 2014; Snow & Uccelli, 2009).

Some language professionals believe that texts are more difficult for certain learners to comprehend primarily because they include specialized technical terms (Meneses et al., 2018). However, AL extends beyond the jargon of a particular discipline and encompasses more than just specialized, technical terms with very precise meanings (Schleppegrell, 2004; Zwiers, 2007). AL includes what we say (content), how we say it (grammar and vocabulary), where we say it (context), and why we say it (purpose) (ACTFL, 2014; Byrnes, 2002).

One of the primary functions of AL is to make content more accessible to the intended audience (Duff, 2010). Speakers might use the linguistic features of a particular register or genre to structure content, and in this way, make the communicator's message easier to follow (Fisher, 2019). Speakers also might employ figurative, representational language, such as culturally-rooted allusions, idioms, or metaphorical expressions to convey nuanced ideas (Coxhead, 2019; Zwiers, 2014). Other instances of AL include clarifying meaning with words that transfer across disciplines (e.g., contribute, evidence, or generate), using formulaic sequences of language (e.g., on the other hand), highlighting sequences with temporal markers or ordinal numbers (e.g., previously, subsequently, next, first, second, third) and signaling logical relationships among ideas with transitional and prepositional phrases (e.g., consequently, furthermore, however) (Coxhead, 2019; Dutro & Moran, 2003; Murray, 2016). Thus, developing AL requires more than asking students to learn a different set of vocabulary words. It means that students must learn to talk about a wider range of topics, to think more critically and abstractly about them, and to structure communication in a more systematic way that adheres to disciplinary conventions (Brozo, Moorman, Meyer, & Stewart, 2013; Hand, Cavagnetto, Chen, & Park, 2016; Kong & Hoare, 2011).

### **What we know about academic language from other fields**

The intentional development of AL proficiency has been a priority for decades in contexts such as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (Bunch, Abram, Lotan, & Valdés, 2001; Chamot & O'Malley, 1987; Cummins, 1980; Mohan, 1989; Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012; Valdés, 2004). TESOL researchers understand that a focus on AL is essential because English language learners need to develop high levels of English language proficiency in order to simultaneously learn grade-level academic content (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987; Short, 1993). Consequently, based on numerous bilingual education studies, Cummins (1980, 1981, 1982) introduced the seminal constructs of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cummins used these constructs to argue that educators and scholars ought to consider two broad categories of language proficiency: the language needed for social, cognitively undemanding situations (BICS), and the language needed for literacy and communication in cognitively demanding, decontextualized academic situations (CALP). Cummins' (1980) theory helped explain, among other things, why a bilingual student might appear to be proficient in their second language in interpersonal communication contexts, but struggle to understand and communicate in it in more decontextualized, academic contexts.

Building on Cummins' work, other researchers have explored different facets of AL. For instance, Chamot & O'Malley (1987) underscored that CALP, defined as "language functions, structures, and subject-specific vocabulary," was a necessary tool for participating in and learning from a content area classroom (p. 236). Other scholars have written about the structural/grammatical features of AL through the lens of functional linguistics and emphasized the integral role of texts, literacies, discourses, and identity in their research (Hawkins, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004; Zamel & Spack, 1998; Zwiers, 2014).

Meanwhile, research and professional development related to AL have continued to expand across the curriculum in K-12 contexts, with an emphasis on building AL

proficiency across subject areas and in all students, including native English speakers (Schleppegrell, 2012; Townsend, 2015; Zwiers, 2014). The Common Core State Standards (2010) specify various AL competencies students should demonstrate at various grade levels and espouse a clear agenda for AL development on a broad scale (Abedi & Linqianti, 2012). Other scholars have emphasized the connection between AL and academic achievement, arguing that educators ought to recognize the “achievement gap as an academic language gap” (Zacarian, 2014, p. 1). These calls emphasize that learners coming from families with higher socioeconomic levels, who are educated in high quality, well-resourced schools are at an advantage in traditional school settings. This advantage is due, in part, because such learners tend to be exposed to more AL through greater access to books, academic experiences outside of school (e.g., museums, vacations, extracurricular learning), and conversations with formally educated adults (Zacarian, 2014). Put another way, learners who are not purposefully exposed to AL may not be able to access and successfully comprehend academic content in school (Meneses et al., 2018). Furthermore, unfamiliarity with AL influences students’ academic achievement, their professional opportunities, and their future socioeconomic success (Meneses et al., 2018). Indeed, K-12 teachers across all content areas are being encouraged to attend to the AL of their respective disciplines explicitly (Zacarian, 2014; Zwiers, 2007, 2014). This emphasis has extended to content areas historically viewed as less language dependent, such as math and physical education (Constantinou, 2015; Swanson, 2010).

### **The role of academic language in U.S. WL education**

Although AL may arise organically in traditional WL classrooms, its development has been largely overlooked as an explicit focus in U.S. WL education despite extensive attention to proficiency development within the last decade (Byrnes, 2002; Fandrych, 2010; Linares, 2017). This is problematic because the limited research that has been conducted on AL development indicates that it plays a key role in learners’ ability to access curricular content (Meneses et al., 2018). Although AL is embedded in several long-standing WL pedagogies, such as task-based instruction, content-based instruction, project-based learning, and Expeditionary Learning, it is also only indirectly addressed in most secondary WL textbooks (Benito Cox & Montgomery, 2019; Burke, 2017; Oxford, 2006; Sato, Hasegawa, Kumagai, & Kamiyoshi, 2017). Additionally, there is a lack of literature directly discussing AL in the traditional secondary WL classroom. When we searched for the term “academic language” appearing in abstracts between the years 2000 and 2020, only one article was found in *Foreign Language Annals*, which involved a study of college students’ academic writing in French (Godfrey, Treacy, & Tarone, 2014). The same search in *Modern Language Journal* resulted in three articles, all of which focus on non-native English speakers learning English. At the 2019 ACTFL Convention and World Languages Expo, only two presentations had “academic language” in their session descriptions. Finally, a search of the past five years of the *CSCTFL Report* revealed zero instances of the phrase “academic language.” These searches suggest there is a difference in the degree to which AL

has been prioritized as an instructional goal in WL as compared to TESOL and other content-based language learning contexts. While there could be a number of reasons for this distinction, we propose several possible explanations.

A focus on AL may not be explicit because it is assumed that WL instructors are teaching it. This premise is illustrated in the rubrics of the edTPA, a high-stakes teaching performance assessment that is required of student teachers in some states and for licensure in others (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, n.d.). In all subject areas except WL, the edTPA evaluates a teacher candidate's ability to support students' AL with at least two rubrics. One rubric asks candidates to identify the AL functions and demands (vocabulary, syntax, and discourse) embedded in a learning task and to describe the aligned instructional supports. The other rubric evaluates how well candidates assess students' use of the targeted AL. The edTPA does not assess WL teachers with these two rubrics because it assumes that AL is "incorporated throughout the teacher's practice as a language instructor" (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity, 2014, p. 27). This presupposition does not guarantee that the language features and functions being taught explicitly by WL teacher candidates are academic in nature. We believe it is possible to enact high-quality, communicative, proficiency-oriented WL instruction that focuses exclusively on informal, colloquial language without integrating AL.

Historically, traditional WL instruction has not been focused on academic content learning. It has prioritized learning language as a system of grammar and vocabulary rather than asking students to learn language in order to access academic and professional content, contexts, and communities (Allen & Paesani, 2010). Although this removal of complexity is intended to be a learning scaffold, it also can preclude students' exposure to culturally authentic texts, intellectually rigorous content, and the development of critical thinking skills in the target language (Wang, 2015). The tendency towards oversimplification and language learning tasks that are only superficially contextualized is often reinforced in WL textbooks which both respond to and shape teachers' perspectives on language teaching. Indeed, the dominance of grammatical content and lack of meaningfully integrated textual content as instantiated in communicative collegiate FL textbooks have long been criticized (Swaffar & Arens, 2005). Further, several empirical studies based on analysis of textbook materials and interviews and questionnaires with FL instructors (Aski, 2003; Wong & VanPatten, 2003) have uncovered a continued reliance on form-focused, mechanical exercises and a lack of engaging content in communicative textbooks" (Allen & Paesani, 2010, p. 128). Consequently, instead of crafting curricula that support academic achievement in the TL and build a solid foundation for lifelong proficiency, it appears that many teachers may still approach instruction from a short-term perspective focused on everyday "survival" uses of the target language.

Without academic content driving the language curriculum in traditional WL classrooms, the need for AL diminishes. As a result, WL testers, educators, and researchers may believe that there is no need to explicitly identify or address AL. This helps to explain why much of the research on AL that does exist in WL

has come from areas such as bilingual education, content-based instruction, dual language immersion, and project-based learning; all of these approaches to language education privilege content. Additionally, because English has become a global lingua franca in many countries around the world, there is a real need for developing advanced proficiency in languages other than English in the fields of government, economy, technology, business, and science has often been construed as less pressing (Freeman-Larsen & Freeman, 2008). Moreover, it could be argued that because many native English speakers already have access to a language of power, they can take WL as an elective or to get into college with no pressing need for proficiency in a world language. Consequently, some WL students and teachers may not consider that attaining proficiency in a second language important. Indeed, many students who enroll in WL classes do not continue past their second year of language study and may never develop the advanced levels of proficiency needed to complete academic or professional tasks successfully (Shedivy, 2004; Schulz, 2002).

We offer these three considerations as contextual factors that may be limiting the intentional inclusion of AL in WL instruction: (1) an assumption that AL is already tacitly a part of typical WL instruction; (2) a perception that academic content/language is not needed; and (3) pedagogical traditions. While these factors may align with the current reality in many traditional WL classrooms, they also run counter to other larger, societal trends such as the increasing need for multilingual skills in the global economy, and the goal of building advanced levels of proficiency (ACTFL, 2014). If we want our students to use their language skills in professional and advanced educational settings, it is imperative that we attend to the development of AL as an essential component of advanced levels of linguistic proficiency (Byrnes, 2002). Moreover, the use of AL is particularly prevalent among those with higher levels of formal education, and thus tends to coincide with higher levels of literacy and power (Radley, 2016). If we do not help learners to develop AL skills, we preclude their ability to gain access to the power circulating among those circles. We also limit their ability to influence those circles in ways that have a significant impact on the world (Radley, 2016).

In summary, while the current research on AL would suggest that AL is primarily an issue for those learning English, whether as an additional language or for native English speakers expanding their linguistic repertoire in conjunction with learning academic content, we argue that a concern for AL development also applies in WL contexts. Indeed, educators and scholars in both WL and TESOL are currently emphasizing the need for more authentic texts and tasks in curriculum and instruction with the goal of simultaneously building language proficiency and academic content understandings in order to build learners' capacity to use the target language as a vehicle for real world learning, communication, and collaboration (Fox, Corretjer, Webb, & Tian, 2019; Heritage, Walqui, & Linquanti, 2015). However, preparing learners to use their WL in professional settings requires more than increasing their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. In order for language learners to function effectively as professionals in a given field, they must learn the thinking processes, disciplinary content, and communicative conventions used by professionals in that field (Brozo et al., 2013; Fisher, 2019).

**Pedagogical strategies for developing academic language with WL students**

We offer a five-step process that teachers can employ to expand the degree to which AL is integrated in a traditional WL curriculum: (1) expand the topic; (2) select three culturally authentic texts (including multimedia); (3) design appropriate tasks and performance assessments requiring all three modes of communication; (4) identify relevant AL; and (5) scaffold instruction to create a continuum of language moving from the concrete to the abstract.

The first step is to expand the unit's concrete topic to include a richer, more realistic conceptual context for communication. One way to do this is by connecting the existing topic to a global issue, a social problem, and/or a cultural context (Montgomery, 2014). Linking the topic to global issues increases the cognitive challenge of the topic for learners, while connecting it to a social problem or cultural context makes it more emotionally engaging and meaningful for them. The second step is to identify a set of at least three culturally authentic texts that could provide learners with more information about interesting issues related to the expanded topic. These texts should be selected from various genres (e.g., informational, literary, multimedia) because different genres present distinct language demands that give learners the chance to practice different registers and communicative functions while working with the targeted grammar and vocabulary within the texts (Montgomery, 2014; Thorne & Rheinhardt, 2013; Tracy, Menickelli, & Scales, 2017). As learners compare and contrast information across multiple texts, they are also able to critically consider the topic from multiple perspectives.

Step three is to develop authentic tasks and performance-based assessments that require all three modes of communication (Gao et al., 2017; Montgomery, 2014). These tasks should be sequenced so that they move from conversations about familiar, concrete topics to discussions about more unfamiliar, abstract, formal ones. When tasks are sequenced in this way, learners can progressively develop their critical thinking skills as they practice functional sequences of language. Once a teacher has identified a rich context with associated texts and tasks, the fourth step is to embed relevant AL strategically into lessons, prioritizing high frequency AL that transfers well across contexts (Zwiers, 2014). In selecting what AL to target, the construct of “brick and mortar” words is useful (Dutro & Moran, 2003, p. 241). “Brick words” refer to content-specific AL, meaning words needed to communicate about a particular topic in a specific context (Dutro & Moran, 2003, p. 241). “Mortar words” refer to the language that connects the brick terms (Dutro & Moran, 2003, p. 241). Mortar language also includes transition words that characterize academic/professional talk and texts (e.g., however, subsequently, therefore). The final step is to scaffold instruction in order to make it easier for learners to incorporate AL into their oral and written communication. To do this, teachers should create a continuum of language that progressively shifts from the concrete to the abstract. As learners move into discussions of more abstract topics, teachers may need to provide scaffolding, such as graphic organizers, sentence frames, transitional phrases, and word banks to support them. In the following, we provide two examples of units that illustrate how AL can be intentionally taught in WL classrooms with Novice and Intermediate-level students.



**Novice-level unit.** In a Novice-level Spanish class, students are progressing through a unit on weather. They have learned basic weather-related vocabulary and practiced simple communication by asking and answering the question, “What’s the weather like today?” Next, they participate in conversational roleplays in which they discuss plans depending on the weather (e.g., “I won’t go swimming if it’s raining”). Often, this is where the unit ends, and while students have gained useful skills for everyday communication, they have not been exposed to much AL.

Alternatively, the teacher could choose to layer on an instructional sequence that deepens the context and enriches the content, thereby facilitating the introduction of some basic AL. Using our five-step process, for step one, the teacher could move students into a discussion about how climate change is affecting people in Central America, applying the weather vocabulary and basic question/answer structures practiced earlier. For step two, she could ask learners to describe images of rural villages in Honduras where years of drought have ravaged small farms. They also could listen to a short radio interview of a Honduran mother describing how her husband was forced to take a job in Mexico because they could no longer subsist off the farm.

For step three, the class could examine a graph illustrating how the amount of rainfall in Honduras has diminished over the past decade. They could predict rainfall for future years based on the existing data, or justify and defend their opinions about what residents should do in light of the information. For step four, as students work through these visual, audio, and written texts, the teacher could highlight key academic vocabulary, such as “scarcity,” “difficult situation,” and “consequently.” For step five, students could practice discussing weather using sentence frames for a simple cause/effect pattern provided by the teacher to support their language production, such as “It did not rain for many months. Consequently, the family did not have enough food.” For the summative assessment, students could create a poster depicting how climate change is affecting Central America, writing captions for the images utilizing academic vocabulary and sentence structures taught explicitly by the teacher. In this manner, the teacher scaffolds students’ communication from how weather affects daily plans (i.e., conversational language) to how climate change influences lives (i.e., academic language).

The expanded unit utilizes the five steps to augment the existing curriculum so that it more intentionally develops learners’ AL skills. Applying these steps makes it possible for Novice-level learners to communicate in simple ways about substantive academic content using elements of AL even though their proficiency levels may vary within a class. Moreover, starting the process of developing AL in beginning levels lays the foundation for future AL proficiency attainment.

**Intermediate-level unit.** Señora Lewis and her Spanish III high school class are in the middle of a unit about professions. The majority of her students are performing at the Intermediate level on formative assessments. Students have expanded their vocabulary for professions beyond the basics (e.g., teacher, doctor, engineer, chef) to include terms such as radiologist, data analyst, and welder. They read a variety of job descriptions and talked about desired qualifications for applicants. This context invites students to discuss individual characteristics,

describe past experiences, and express future goals. The summative assessment for the unit requires students to roleplay a job interview and write a cover letter to apply for a job of their choice. Although this unit offers potential for meaningful language learning, using the five steps Señora Lewis could focus more explicit attention to AL development and the thinking skills as depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Augmenting a Traditional Lesson to Include More Academic Language*

Traditional Lesson Sequence		→	Lesson Applying the Five Strategies	
Textbook topic	Professions	→	Expanded context(s)	Professions in a global economy
Guiding question	What profession will you have?	→	Guiding question connected to global issues, social problems, or cultural contexts	How are technological and environmental changes influencing professions in the 21st century?
Vocabulary	Professions  Descriptive adjectives	→	Culturally authentic texts that include targeted vocabulary  (for relevant activities, see Communicative activities/tasks box)	Actual online job descriptions from Spain, Peru, and Mexico  A newspaper article describing the economic and professional impacts of technologies that are replacing human workers  A video depicting how climate change is affecting rural farmers in Guatemala
Grammar	Descriptive adjectives  Verbs like <i>gustar</i>  Present perfect tense  Future and conditional tense	→	Communicative, proficiency-based language functions that require the use of targeted grammatical structures	Describe personal qualities in job interview and résumé  Exchange information about personal interests, qualifications, and preferences  Describe previous work experience  Express future goals



<b>Communicative activities/tasks (3 modes)</b>	Mock job interview and writing a cover letter to apply for the job of their choice	→	<b>Communicative tasks that require critical thinking</b>	Compare and contrast two similar applicants or job openings  Justify and defend your opinion about how immigration policies may affect employment opportunities for immigrants
<b>Assessment</b>	Unit test containing key grammar and vocabulary	→	<b>Performance-based assessment tasks</b>	Create a TED talk presentation hypothesizing about which jobs will be obsolete 30 years from now

For step one, Señora Lewis could expand the topic by inviting students to discuss professions in the context of a global economy. She might increase opportunities for students to encounter AL by connecting the unit to global issues such as climate change, social issues like immigration, or cultural contexts such as farming in Guatemala. For step two, she could ask learners to engage with culturally authentic texts, such as online job descriptions from Spain, Peru, and Mexico; a newspaper article describing the economic and professional impacts of technologies that are replacing human workers; and/or videos depicting how climate change is affecting rural farmers in Guatemala.

For step three, Señora Lewis might ask learners to evaluate whether or not they would be qualified for the jobs they read about, and to exchange information about their personal interests, qualifications, and preferences. Learners might then describe their future goals, prepare *résumés*, or participate in mock job interviews. After helping learners explore the topic of professions in their own lives, Señora Lewis might then help students consider it from a more global perspective. She could ask learners to identify different types of global change (e.g., climate change, cultural change, political change, or technological change). Then, she could encourage students to investigate how each type of change may be influencing the global economy. Learners could use their critical thinking skills to advocate for various actions to minimize or accelerate the impact of different kinds of changes on the global economy. For instance, she might ask learners to justify and defend their opinions about how immigration policies may affect employment opportunities for immigrants.

For step four, Señora Lewis could create a continuum of language that progressively shifts from a focus on concrete brick words toward more abstract mortar words. Brick words could include “career,” “technician,” “*résumé*,” “apply,” and “employ.” In order to say something meaningful about a *résumé* for a prospective job, the speaker needs connective language to formulate a specific

message: “I have submitted my *résumé* to express interest in the technician position.” The words surrounding *résumé*, such as “submit” and “express interest in,” represent more professional/academic versions of “give” and “want.” If the speaker were to write “I’m giving you my *résumé* because I want the technician job,” it would basically communicate the same idea, but with an inappropriate level of informality. “Submit” and “express interest” are considered mortar words because they are used across many academic contexts.

For step five, in preparation for a class discussion on unemployment, Señora Lewis might ask her students to form pairs and brainstorm problems the unemployed might experience. Students might record their answers on a graphic organizer using phrases like, “They can’t buy food because they don’t have money,” “They might lose their homes because they can’t pay their bills,” “They can’t go to the doctor because they don’t have insurance,” and “They can’t get to a new job because they don’t have transportation.” Next, Señora Lewis might summarize learners’ responses on the whiteboard. As she does so, she might use a different grammatical construction to affirm their responses in ways that provide academic words for describing each of those concepts (e.g., poverty, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, and so forth). In this way, she moves learners from using simple, concrete sentences like “*No tienen dinero*.” [“They don’t have money.”], and “*Son pobres*.” [“They are poor.”] to more conceptual, AL like *la pobreza* [poverty], *la hambre* [hunger], and *el desempleo* [unemployment].

Besides using the five-step process, there are many other pedagogical strategies that Señora Lewis could integrate to develop and scaffold her students’ use of AL. For instance, she might create word walls that contain academic vocabulary relevant to different professions (Escamilla, 1999). She also could use word study activities designed to help learners notice the roots of some of those words (e.g. *empleo* [employment] as the root of *desempleo* [unemployment]), as well as prefixes like *des-* [un-], or suffixes like *-ción* [-tion]. She could identify academic words and phrases that transfer across disciplines (e.g., *En mi opinión* [In my opinion]), and then develop sentence frames and word banks to support learners in using those words more successfully during oral and written activities. The use of transitional words such as *by contrast*, *consequently*, *furthermore*, *however*, and *therefore* can also support learners in connecting ideas in ways that improve their persuasiveness. Through strategic planning and utilization of strategies such as these, teachers can incorporate AL into their regular curriculum. In so doing, they incrementally and systematically build a foundation for advanced levels of proficiency (Uccelli & Phillips Galloway, 2017).

This incremental and systematic building towards advanced proficiency is essential, especially as teachers consider what it means to integrate AL into lower level WL courses. Vocabulary and the conceptual load of texts dealing with academic and cultural content may be daunting to a language learner, especially at beginning and intermediate levels. For us, “text” encompasses written, visual, graphic, and spoken input necessitating comprehension and interpretation on the part of the listener/viewer/reader. While we recognize that certain texts, tasks, and themes may be inappropriate for beginners to grapple with independently, we

maintain that instructional scaffolding must be planned to accompany them. For example, in order to prepare students to complete Advanced-level functions at the Novice level, learners can start by expressing an opinion in very simple language (*Yo creo...* [I believe...], or *No creo...* [I don't believe...]). They can then learn to support that opinion using simple connectors like *porque...* [because...], and to extend their sentences supported by sentence frames and word banks (Montgomery, 2014). With sufficient support, pre-teaching, and repetition, language learners can work with and comprehend academic and culturally authentic texts, and in the process, acquire AL and structures essential to AL and improve their proficiency.

### **Academic language as access**

The intimate relationship between linguistic proficiency and AL suggests that by infusing AL into WL classrooms, learners' performance can shift towards higher levels of proficiency (Brown & Bown, 2015; Byrnes, 2002). However, our argument for AL integration is also about access—access to communities, opportunities, and knowledge. When WL educators provide exposure to rich, academic input, they equip students with the ability to converse about important issues using language that is precise and appropriate (Brown & Bown, 2015). By so doing, they give learners opportunities to influence those issues (Radley, 2016). By teaching students to discuss texts using technical vocabulary, they develop disciplinary literacy, or the tools they need to approach problems using the professional perspectives and problem-solving strategies of a particular discipline. When students debate issues using AL, they have a voice that is recognizable by professional and/or academic communities and can be taken seriously when they take action (Brown & Bown, 2015; Leaver & Shekhtman, 2002). In each of these ways, paying more attention to AL in WL classrooms can give our students a seat and a voice at tables where people are solving real problems related to science, politics, art, and culture. In addition, when we discuss compelling, complex topics in a WL classroom, we honor our students' intellectual potential by pairing language learning with communication about ideas that actually matter. As the theoretical construct of AL becomes an instructional reality in WL classrooms, we can unlock a whole new world of possibilities for our students.

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# Integrating Big C and Little C Culture into Novice-Level University German Curriculum

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## Abstract

In recent discussions regarding the role of world languages in humanities and liberal arts programs at universities, the field of language teaching has been seeking ways to define the relationship between language and culture (Allen & Maxim, 2011; Kern, 2011; MLA, 2007; Schulz, 2007; Schulz, Lalande, Dystra-Pruim, Zimmer-Loew, & James, 2008). In order to increase students' cultural knowledge and engage and elicit subjective responses through aesthetic appreciation and interpretation in terms of artistic input, Novice-level German courses at a large U.S. western university implemented two significant changes into the curriculum: visits to the university art museum and attendance at musical performances featuring German composers. Participants in this study included 118 students enrolled in German 101 or 102. For this study, pre- and post-questionnaire data were analyzed to investigate the following research question: To what extent can Novice-level learners of German increase their cultural knowledge over the course of one semester with a focus on German classical music (including opera) and German art and artists? The findings indicated that after learning about German artists and composers, and their works, in the classroom and during fieldwork to the museum and music performances, students learned to appreciate fine art and classical music from the target culture, and they were likely to seek out cultural opportunities on their own after completion of the course.

*Keywords:* language teaching, fine arts, German teaching, novice-level German, culture, music, portfolio assessment

## Introduction

In recent discussions regarding the role of world languages in humanities and liberal arts programs at universities, the field of language teaching has been seeking ways to define the relationship between language and culture (Allen & Maxim, 2011; Kern, 2011; MLA, 2007; Schulz, 2007; Schulz, Lalande, Dystra-Pruim, Zimmer-Loew, & James, 2008). In the past, most language majors have focused first on a language curriculum before focusing on reading and studying literature in the target language (TL), or reading and learning about cultures associated with the language (Allen & Maxim, 2011; Kern, 2011). With discussions in the profession regarding the role of languages in university courses, the traditional literature-based approach to language teaching has been redirected (Allen & Maxim, 2011; Kern, 2011; MLA, 2007). According to Bernhardt-Kamil (2019), simultaneous focus on language and content instruction (e.g., literature, culture, history) should begin in the very first semester of learning a language. The current goal of language teaching and learning is to encourage and facilitate critical awareness of both content and the TL (Cutshall, 2012; McAlpine, 2000; MLA, 2007; NSCB, 2015; Schulz, 2007; Schulz, Lalande, Dystra-Pruim, Zimmer-Loew, & James, 2008). With this philosophical shift in the way languages are taught at the university level, certain language program directors and faculty at U.S. universities have reviewed course goals, learning outcomes, and pedagogical approaches to teaching world languages to fit the new paradigm (Burke & Ducar, 2018; Urlaub & Watzinger-Tharp, 2016).

At Brigham Young University (BYU), the German department has found that even though the fine arts are integral to many humanities courses, art and music also can play an important role in teaching Novice-level language, culture, and cultural history. Integrating visual arts and classical music into German language courses has made it possible for instructors to assist students in becoming culturally competent in the target culture early on in language learning. By providing tasks and activities that introduce students to famous works of art and musical compositions in the classroom and as homework, students have been able to learn about the target culture through art and classical music. By using the *World-readiness standards for learning languages* (NSCB, 2015) and the *2007 MLA report*, at BYU, we created a culture portfolio assignment with learning outcomes for language learning and culture. We believed that by having students interact with a form of art or musical composition from the German culture, they would be able understand and appreciate formal aspects of culture as an important part of their language learning experience. As a result, in Fall Semester 2017, in addition to regular course requirements, German 101 and 102 students were required to attend cultural events, develop their own thoughts about cultural products of the target culture, and deepen their language learning experience.

The *World-readiness standards for learning languages* emphasize the necessity for world language students to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives, as well as the relationship between the products and perspectives, of the cultures studied (NSCB, 2015). By reflecting on the relationship between language and cultural perspectives, students are enabled to

communicate with other people in other cultures in a variety of settings; look beyond their customary borders; develop insight into their own language and culture; [and] act with greater awareness of self, of other cultures, and their own relationship to those cultures. (NSCB, 2015, p. 7)

Further, language and culture education should be part of the core curriculum because it “develops and enhances basic communication skills and higher order thinking skills” (NSCB, 2015, p. 7). Integrating art, art history, and classical music into the German curriculum can allow world language (WL) students to learn about and interact with the target culture and develop understandings about how particular cultural products fit into target culture socially, historically, and culturally.

In an effort to facilitate student understanding of the relationships between cultural products, practices, and perspectives, beginning in Fall 2017 the BYU German Department integrated aspects of the fine arts into its first-year curriculum by means of a culture portfolio. The purpose of having Novice-level language learners participate in this study was to introduce them in the first year to integral aspects of “big C” German culture early on in their language learning career so they would appreciate and discuss art and classical music. Instructors of German 101 and 102 courses implemented two significant changes into the curriculum: visits to the university art museum and attendance at musical performances featuring German composers. Through four culture portfolio assignments over the course of the semester, students prepared for the museum visit and musical performance and reflected on their experiences following each event. The goal of the culture portfolio was to increase students’ cultural knowledge and to engage and elicit subjective responses through aesthetic appreciation and interpretation in terms of artistic input. For this study, pre- and post-questionnaire data were analyzed to investigate the following research question: To what extent can Novice-level learners of German increase their cultural knowledge over the course of one semester with a focus on German classical music (including opera) and German art and artists? The findings indicated that after learning about German artists and composers, and their works, in the classroom and during fieldwork to the museum and music performances, students learned to appreciate fine art and classical music, and they were likely to seek out cultural opportunities on their own after completion of the course.

### **Literature review**

The *World-readiness standards for learning languages* were first introduced in 1996 as the *Standards for foreign language learning* as part of a national effort to describe what language learners should know and be able to do at different stages of language learning. As noted in the *World-readiness standards for learning languages* document, one important reason to study another language and culture is so learners can communicate effectively in the target language, knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom (NSCB, 2015). In recent years, reports in the fields of education, business, and government have emphasized the necessity of ensuring that world language students are world-ready and globally

prepared to function in society by the time they finish their college degree (Brecht, Abbott, Davidson, Rivers, Weinberg, & Yoganathan, 2013; Garrett-Rucks, 2016; Jackson & Malone, 2009; Malone & Rivers, 2013; MLA, 2007; Magnan, Murphy, & Sahakyan, 2014; Magnan, Murphy, Sahakyan, & Kim, 2012; Redmond, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Language teaching professionals have been convinced of this need for decades, striving to implement proficiency-oriented approaches of teaching languages and intercultural competence models into their own curricula (Redmond, 2014). By using a culture portfolio, the IMAGE Model for Exploring Cultural Exploration (Glisan & Donato, 2017), and lectures by experts, teachers can prepare students to handle potentially linguistically-challenging situations with native speakers in real-world contexts and to become intercultural competent (Garrett-Rucks, 2016; Van Houten, Couet, & Fulkerson, 2014).

### *The teaching and learning of culture*

In 2007, Schulz reviewed the literature to date on the teaching and learning of culture and reported that even though numerous scholars have maintained that culture and intercultural competence should be part of the language curriculum from the beginning of instruction, many teachers are not sure how to begin teaching culture and intercultural competence. Even though several approaches for incorporating culture have been recommended, there is still no agreement among language educators on how culture can or should be defined in terms of particular instruction goals, and there is even less consensus on how it should be formally assessed (Arens, 2010; Bell, 2005; Bell, 2015; NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017; Schulz et al., 2008). Schulz (2007) suggested five basic goals that could serve as the basis for assisting language learners in developing cross-cultural understanding and intercultural competence.

1. Students develop and demonstrate an awareness that geographic, historical, economic, social/religious, and political factors can have an impact on cultural perspectives, products, and practices, including language use and styles of communication.
2. Students develop and demonstrate awareness that situational variables (e.g., context and role expectations, including power differentials, and social variables such as age, gender, social class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residence) shape communicative interaction (verbal, nonverbal, and paralinguistic) and behavior in important ways.
3. Students recognize stereotypes or generalizations about their home and target cultures and evaluate them in terms of the amount of substantiating evidence.
4. Students develop and demonstrate an awareness that each language and culture has culture-conditioned images and culture-specific connotations of some words, phrases, proverbs, idiomatic formulations, gestures, etc.
6. Students develop and demonstrate an awareness of some types of causes (linguistic and nonlinguistic) for cultural misunderstanding between members of different cultures. (p. 17)

Wright (2000), Abrams (2002), Allen (2004), Abrams, Byrd, Moehring, & Boovy (2006), Schulz (2007) suggest teachers use portfolio assessment to evaluate students' developing cultural awareness. Abrams (2002) and Wright (2000) recommend that the culture portfolio be integrated into existing language courses or serve as the basis for a separate course in comparative cultures.

### *Culture portfolios*

One effective method of assisting students in developing intercultural competence is the implementation of a course culture portfolio project (Abrams, 2002; Allen, 2004; Moore, 1994; Wright, 2000). In the late 1990s, one of the first studies that focused on using culture portfolios to increase students' cultural awareness, sensitivity to, and understanding of other cultures was conducted by Wright (2000). He and others since then have found that a culture portfolio approach facilitates meaningful cultural acquisition in students (Abrams, 2002; Abrams et al., 2006; Allen, 2004; Bell, 2009; Wright, 2000). The process set forth by the culture portfolio assignment guided students in German 101 (Novice-level German I) and 102 (Novice-level German II) to learn how to learn about, understand, and appreciate Germans (Wright, 2000). Throughout the semester, students completed tasks related to learning about another culture of their choice in general, and to learning about the German culture specifically. First, students chose a topic and provided an annotated bibliography of five sources that could be either in the TL or in English. Then, students answered questions about what culture meant to them in English, how their topic could or could not be connected to the culture of their home community, generalizations and stereotypes held about their topic, and why learning about their topic in-depth was important to them. Next, students submitted a draft of their portfolio, and revised it based on teacher feedback. Near the end of the semester, students presented the results of their culture portfolio assignments to their peers in English during an in-class poster session. Wright (2000) found that students who learned about the target culture through the portfolio process were more likely to react positively to members of and situations in the target culture than their peers who did not complete the culture portfolio assignment. Wright (2000) had allowed students to answer in English because his study focused on developing intercultural awareness rather than cultural awareness in the TL.

Abrams (2002) used a similar approach to Wright's (2000) culture portfolio at the university level with Novice-level students to explore how their cross-cultural awareness developed while completing semester-long, Internet-based culture portfolios. She learned that students in her treatment group were better able to understand how members of the target culture thought than students in the control group. Through constructing, presenting, and reflecting on their culture portfolios, students gained sympathy to the variance of the cultures within German-speaking countries and showed awareness of the notion that political boundaries are not sufficient for establishing cultural memberships. Students began the portfolio assignment by examining stereotypes certain Germans held of Americans. Students chose and analyzed aspects of their own culture compared

with the target culture and shared their findings with their classmates. As students later conducted interviews with native German speakers, students learned that no two Germans provided the same answers to their questions based on stereotypes (Abrams, 2002).

Allen's (2004) culture portfolio project differed from those of Wright (2000) and Abrams (2002) in that her emphasis was on how students' knowledge and ideas about one specific aspect of French culture were changed and improved because of the project. Novice-level university students were required to demonstrate their thinking processes and cross-cultural understandings by researching their target language culture and their culture. First, students completed the sentence: "Culture is..." Then, students made a statement about French culture as a result of their sentence on culture. Next, students accessed several sources related to their statement about French culture and compared their statements about their own culture with their statements about French culture. Allen (2004) reported that as a result of this project, students were better prepared to try to understand other cultures and arrived at shared meanings of the French culture.

In 2006, Abrams, Byrd, Moehring, and Boovy researched the use of culture portfolios in Novice-level university German courses. Based on interviews with teachers who used culture portfolios in their teaching, and students who completed the culture portfolio assignment, the researchers discovered ways to improve their culture portfolio assignment. The researchers advised instructors to focus classroom instruction on teaching students to make sense of what they read, saw, and heard. They also suggested using authentic materials to help alleviate the pressure on teachers to be the only source of knowledge about a specific aspect of the target culture. The researchers felt that the culture portfolio provided an ideal approach to learning about the culture of another society while also learning about one's own culture. They also believed language and culture should be integrated to strengthen each other. They encouraged language teachers to consider students' and teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the culture portfolio as well as student performance on culture portfolio assignments in future research.

#### *The IMAGE model for exploring cultural perspectives*

In 2017, Glisan and Donato introduced six high-leverage teaching practices for language teachers. One of the five focused "on cultural products, practices, and perspectives in a dialogic context" (p. 115). With the IMAGE model, Glisan and Donato (2017) mapped out how language teachers can plan and guide even Novice-level language learners to make cultural observations and hypotheses. They emphasized that "[t]eachers and learners must be aware of how language instruction can be integrated with culture in ways that go beyond simply describing behaviors, learning about cultural customs, and memorizing historical facts" (Glisan & Donato, 2017, p. 115). By following Glisan and Donato's (2017) template and instructions, guiding language learners to learn and think critically about the target culture in the TL can become a realistic and integral part of world language classrooms.

The IMAGE model begins with a planning phase in which the teacher identifies the cultural content of the lesson, essential vocabulary words and formulaic phrases



students will need to participate in the lesson, and grammar structures students will need (e.g., comparative forms of adjectives). The lesson is created around a series of cultural images the teacher uses to guide students to make cultural observations and draw conclusions, and it is structured around three activities that invite students to say what they see, what they think, and what they are still wondering about after the lesson.

When enacting the lesson, the teacher presents the lesson in four steps: (1) images (I) and making observations (M); (2) analyzing additional information (A); (3) generating hypotheses about cultural perspectives (G); and (4) exploring perspectives and reflecting further (E) (Glisan & Donato, 2017, pp. 125-129). For the first step, the teacher uses dialogic interaction in the TL by using a series of carefully scaffolded questions that fall into two categories: fact questions and thought questions. The teacher asks three to five fact questions about each image (e.g., What do you see? Which colors do you see? How many people? When might this photo have been taken?). The teacher decides how many images to use. For the second step, the teacher provides additional information about the cultural product and/or practice in the form of a text or data in the TL. Students complete a task while reading the information that leads students to start to think about perspectives of the target culture group. The teacher may choose as many additional sources as desired.

For the third step, the teacher shows a second set of images that encourage students to form hypotheses about possible perspectives expressed by the product and/or practice. Because these are new images, the teacher begins by asking a few fact questions. Then, students are asked to begin to reflect on the perspectives, and the teacher asks three to five thought questions in the TL (e.g., What do you think? Why are there seven types of recycling receptacles? Why is there graffiti on only one side of the wall?) These thought questions should encourage students to reflect on possible meanings of the product or practice. Then, students are given a task to complete. For Novice-level learners, Glisan and Donato (2017) suggest that students complete a multiple-choice task. For example, the teacher would present three possible perspectives in the TL and ask students in pairs to (a) select one of the perspectives based on the images and information they have seen and analyzed and/or (b) rank order the three perspectives from the most to least important, obvious, comprehensive, interesting, etc., and ask students why they selected or rank ordered perspectives this way.

For step four, students are asked to explore perspectives and reflect further on what they learned in class. The teacher asks what students are still wondering about in terms of the cultural product and/or practice and what they would like to learn more about. Students complete a homework assignment or project to explore the cultural products, practices, and perspectives more deeply. Students may use Internet tools to expand their knowledge and find additional images or information related to the topic. Students then bring what they learned to class and present in the TL.

#### *IPA and culture portfolio projects*

Zapata, Cabrera, Siguenza-Ortiz, & Vierma (2014) reported a recent change in the language curriculum for Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Southern

California. Four different culture portfolio projects based on the *World-readiness standards for learning languages*, the 2012 *ACTFL proficiency guidelines*, and the Integrated Performance Assessment (Adair-Hauck, Glisan, & Troyan, 2013) were implemented in Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced-low Spanish courses at USC. Each culture portfolio project involved hands-on tasks based on topics presented in class (e.g., food, making purchases, the environment, business, the arts) and required students to interact with native speakers of Spanish in the Los Angeles area in various social settings and contexts. Prior to each portfolio activity, instructors created in-class materials to assist students to interact with native speakers in socially and culturally appropriate ways. The levels of the materials were based on students' proficiency levels (Novice, Intermediate, or Advanced) according to the 2012 *ACTFL proficiency guidelines*. Students recorded their interactions through video or audio recordings, photographs, and written reports and wrote reflections based on cultural similarities and differences and the development of their own interlanguage.

Prior to working on a portfolio activity, students were mentored on how to find places where they could complete their projects. They worked on interpersonal and presentational tasks in small groups to prepare them to communicate with the native speakers. Students' language production was analyzed during presentational tasks, and corrective feedback on linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects was provided to students. Student work was assessed using 11 holistic categories that focus on the following: (1) the comprehensiveness of the material submitted; (2) creativity; (3) the depth of the linguistic reflections; (4) the depth of the cultural reflections; (5) use of TL vocabulary; (6) use of TL grammar; (7) reading comprehension; (8) listening comprehension; (9) oral proficiency; (10) overall accuracy; and (11) overall fluency (Zapata et al., 2014, p. 39). The nature of these tasks were based on student proficiency levels according to the *ACTFL proficiency guidelines* (ACTFL, 2012). Most students believed they achieved linguistic success in their encounters speaking with native speakers, and they reported that the native speakers were willing to help students communicate and be understood. The researchers found that their cultural portfolio activities encouraged meaningful use of the TL while students learned about the cultures of the native speakers in the area.

### *Big C culture and little c culture*

Before the first *Standards for language learning* document was first introduced in 1996, "big C" (formal) and "little c" (daily life) culture were discussed as two distinct aspects of culture because most teachers were most comfortable teaching about great figures in cultural history, politics, and products of literature, fine arts, and science, all of which were information included in textbooks (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). The "little c" culture topics were perceived to be more daunting for many teachers because these topics were not covered in textbooks (Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Seelye, 1993). "Little c" culture topics included aspects of daily living studied by anthropologists and sociologists, such as food, tools, clothing, housing, transportation, and all behavioral patterns considered to be necessary and appropriate by the target culture. In the *World-readiness standards for learning*

*languages*, both aspects of culture were merged into the overarching concept we regard as *culture* because both aspects of culture are “inextricably woven into the language of those who live in the culture, and because understanding and involvement with both is vitally important for students at all levels of language learning” (NSCB, 2015, p. 48)

The definition of culture referred to in this study is taken from Standard Two, *Cultures*, in the *World-readiness standards for learning languages*. Cultural practices are defined as those patterns of behavior accepted by society that deal with rites of passage, the use of forms of discourse, the use of space, and the social pecking order. They represent the knowledge of “what to do when and where” (NSCB, 2015, p. 50). Cultural products can be defined as tangible (i.e., paintings, a piece of literature, German authors and composers, traditional German clothing, etc.) and intangible (i.e., dances, folk music, holiday traditions, etc.) in nature. Whether the product is tangible or intangible, it is important for students to learn the underlying beliefs and values of the target culture (cultural perspectives) and the cultural practices involve the use of that particular product (NSCB, 2015).

## Methodology

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: To what extent can Novice-level learners of German increase their cultural knowledge over the course of one semester with a focus on German classical music (including opera) and German art and artists? To date, the author has not found any studies that have explored the use of a culture portfolio to explore “big C” (formal) cultural products systematically when introducing Novice world language students to the fine arts (e.g., paintings and classical music) in the target culture. Even though previous studies using culture portfolios have focused exclusively on student learning about “little c” culture with the intent of increasing student intercultural understanding, the author felt that asking students to explore “big C” culture through a culture portfolio would allow students to gain appreciation for cultural artifacts (e.g., paintings and operas) and develop understandings of their historical significance through the lens of “big C” culture while also learning about “little c” culture.

### *Participants and context*

Participants in this study were 118 Novice-level German students at BYU during the Fall 2017 Semester. All students were enrolled in one of the sections of German 101 (Novice-level German I) or German 102 (Novice-level German II). Although there were different instructors for each course, all courses were taught using a proficiency-oriented approach to learning German, with the same textbook, course syllabus, lesson plans, and assessments.

Throughout the course of the semester, students completed four assignments that were compiled and submitted in the form of a culture portfolio at the end of the semester (Appendix A). Students answered comprehension questions from the assigned course readings in German (all readings were instructor-prepared and in German), guest lectures (mostly in German), and the Internet (websites cited were either in English and German). Students’ first two portfolio assignments were completed in German

and were assessed using a rubric that considered the following eight categories: (1) completion of required components; (2) accuracy; (3) cultural awareness; (4) use of target vocabulary; (5) use of target grammar; (6) writing proficiency; (7) oral proficiency; and (8) reflection. Students received the rubric in advance along with detailed explanations of what was required to receive full credit for each category (Appendix D). Students were given deadlines to complete each assignment but were allowed to revise and resubmit each assignment at the end of the semester for additional credit. Students were asked to write the second two portfolio assignments in English and were assessed using three categories: (1) completion of required components; (2) cultural awareness; and (3) reflection. The main reason students were asked to complete these assignments in English was to allow students to write about their experiences, feelings, emotions, and reflections in their native language without worrying about how to word their thoughts and feelings in another language. Another reason students were asked to write these reflections in English is that Garrett-Rucks (2016), a leading expert on intercultural communication and competence in language teaching and learning, suggests that learners at lower levels of proficiency may need to complete assignments that require them to engage in deep cultural analysis outside of class in English. She also notes that because only 1.6% of college students in the U.S. continue to advanced levels of language instruction, integrating meaningful cultural reflection is essential in lower-level language courses to prepare language students for the challenges of our global society (Garrett-Rucks, 2016).

In preparation for attending musical performances and visiting the museum, students learned about six German composers and six German artists through student presentations. Instructors focused on six famous German composers whose works were featured in performances on campus: Mozart (1756-1791), Bach (1685-1750), Beethoven (1770-1827), Mendelssohn (1809-1847), Schumann (1810-1856), and Johann Strauss, Jr. (1825-1899). Students worked in small groups to prepare and present information about one of the composers in German. They were required to teach the class in German about the composer's life and music as well as historical, cultural, and political events in Germany during his life.

Following the same pattern as with learning about the six composers, students worked in small groups to prepare and present information about one of the artists in German. Instructors focused on six of the famous German painters whose works are on display at the BYU Museum of Art: Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911), Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543), Lucas Cranach the Younger (1515-1586), Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), and Max Ernst (1891-1976). Once again, students were asked to teach their classmates in German about the artist's life and art as well as historical, cultural, and political events in Germany during his life.

To introduce students to museum etiquette, art history, concert etiquette, and classical music, professors from various departments on campus gave lectures to German students outside of regularly scheduled language classes. There were four total lectures. First, a professor in art taught students the importance of viewing a piece of art in person. He also explained how to study an important work of art. This lecture was given in English. Second, an art history professor taught students about the significance of German art and artists. He is fluent in German

and gave his lecture mostly in German. Third, the university art museum director of education demonstrated museum etiquette and talked about the history of the museum. He is a native of Vienna, Austria and spoke mostly in German. After learning about art and art history, the university opera director instructed students about opera as an art form. He had performed in operas in German-speaking countries for more than 20 years and shared many experiences. He lectured in German about how to appreciate and watch opera and arranged for opera students to perform short excerpts from German operas.

Following lectures and presentations about German opera and German composers, students attended a performance of the classic German operetta *Die Fledermaus* [The Bat]. The day following the performance, students wrote a reflective essay in English and engaged in an online class discussion about the performance using information about the composer Johann Strauss, Jr. and his operetta. Students wrote and discussed in English so they could focus more on their reflections and less on their production of written German. They discussed whether they enjoyed the performance, what they were able to understand, how they felt that they were able to understand the importance of the opera, and why they felt knowledge about music composed by Germans is important for their own understanding of German language and culture.

Later in the semester, students visited the art museum to see German paintings in person. The director of education greeted them in German and gave them instructions. Students spent about two hours in the museum. The day following the museum visit, students wrote reflective essays in English to demonstrate their understanding of the works of art they viewed in person. They also discussed why they felt knowledge about famous paintings by Germans is important for their own understanding of German language and culture. The reason students were asked to write in English was to allow them write more than they could in German at that point in the semester. German 101 students were at the Novice-Mid to Novice-High level, and German 102 students were at the Novice-High to Intermediate-Low level. At these levels, students are writing lists, short messages, and simple notes. They are starting to write sentences and can write simple facts and ideas that are loosely connected on topics of personal interest. Learners use basic vocabulary and linguistic structures. Writing at this level is generally only comprehensible to teachers and NSs who are accustomed to the writing of non-native speakers (NNSs) (ACTFL, 2012).

The following demographic information about participants was collected: age, gender, major course of study, familiarity with art, and familiarity with classical music. Age and gender are not important variables in this study—they simply provide information about the students. Participant ages ranged from 18-27 years old. Sixty-two students identified as male, and 56 as female. Forty-two percent of the students had declared majors in the College of Humanities, 21% in the School of Business, 16% in the College of Engineering, 8% in the College of Music, 7% in the College of Education, and 6% had not yet decided on a major. Prior to taking German, 80.49% of the students considered themselves to be at least somewhat familiar with classical music performances, 72.2% were at least somewhat familiar

with musical symphonies, 12.71% considered themselves to be at least somewhat familiar with opera, and 44.05% considered themselves to be at least somewhat familiar with art. Anonymity was guaranteed.

#### *Data collection*

At the beginning of the semester, students completed a preliminary questionnaire containing items asking them to rate their knowledge of and experience with the fine arts (e.g., paintings and classical music) in general and the fine arts in German cultural history (Appendix C). The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine how many students were familiar with paintings, classical music, and German cultural history before being required to learn about German artists and composers as part of the course. These data were collected to compare with student responses to similar questionnaire items at the end of the semester to see if students' attitudes and behaviors toward German art and music changed.

At the end of the semester, students completed a questionnaire with items similar to those to which they responded at the beginning of the semester (Appendix D). Descriptive statistics were recorded for each of the questionnaires, and comparisons were made between student responses to the questionnaires at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the semester. Students were asked to rate the following: whether they enjoyed attending the opera and art museum, how much they know about German composers and artists, and how likely they were to attend an opera or art museum on their own. They also were asked to respond to open-ended questions about their experiences during the semester and their feelings toward opera and art.

#### *Data analysis*

Following Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2019) three-phase process for qualitative data analysis: reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions, the author analyzed student responses to the open-ended questions. In the first phase, the data reduction process, all student responses to all open-ended questions were collected, reduced, coded, and organized, and irrelevant data were discarded. All statements related to the research study were identified, and each was assigned a code. The author assigned descriptive code labels to data that summarized a word, short phrase, or entire sentence. Codes are labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive information compiled from student responses to open-ended questions. Each code became a category into which each piece of data was placed. The coded data provided an "inventory" of topics for categorizing (Miles et al., 2019, p. 65). Categories for similar student responses emerged from the coded data.

In the second phase, data display, the author displayed the data in tables and listed the number of times a word or phrase from each category appeared in the data. Noting the frequency count after a category of responses usually reveals how important a category is; however, a category with a low frequency count can also provide meaningful explanations into student perceptions of opera and art in general and how opera and art relate to learning German (Miles et al., 2019). Following data display, the author reflected on questions regarding the data: (1) What types of responses do students write? (2) Which words and phrases do students use in



responses? (3) How many times does each piece of data occur in all responses?

In the final phase, the author began to draw conclusions regarding student responses to questions regarding their experiences with opera and art. These initial conclusions were then verified using results of previous research on topics of using portfolios in language classes to increase student knowledge and understand of cultural aspects in the target culture. Quotes from student responses are used to explain most common responses on the topics of opera and art. The following four major categories emerged from the data analysis of student responses to open-ended questions about German art and painters: (1) *learning about an artist* helps me understand and appreciate a painting better; (2) *understanding the historical context* of the artist and his work helps me understand and appreciate a painting better; (3) understanding the *artist's intentions* helps me understand and appreciate a painting better; and (4) *seeing a work of art in person* can be more meaningful than seeing a print or photograph of it. Similarly, the following four major categories emerged from the analysis of student responses to open-ended questions about German opera and composers: (1) *learning about a composer* helps me understand and appreciate an opera better; (2) *understanding the historical context* of the composer and his work helps me understand and appreciate an opera better; (3) understanding the *composer's intentions* helps me understand and appreciate an opera better; and (4) *attending a live performance in person* can be more meaningful than watching or listening to a recording of it.

In order to ensure reliability of the analysis, the author used member validation and data triangulation (Flick, 2018). First, by randomly selecting 10 students to look at a summary of analysis and to comment critically on the appropriateness of the findings, the author employed the technique of member validation to determine that the results of analysis were appropriate. Second, by looking at the results of the qualitative open-ended student responses in combination with the results of the quantitative student responses to survey items, the author used data triangulation to demonstrate credibility of the data analysis (Flick, 2018).

## Results

By analyzing student responses to Likert questionnaire items, the researcher was able to determine that the majority of all participants were not familiar with classical works by German composers, including opera. In fact, the results of the questionnaire given at the beginning of the semester indicate that only 14 (11.86%) of the 118 German students who participated in this study were somewhat or very familiar with classical works by German composers, and only two students (1.69%) were familiar at all with operas by German composers.

The results of the questionnaire regarding familiarity with art and German artists given to students at the beginning of the semester indicate that less than half of all Novice-level German students (44.05%) reported that they were at least somewhat familiar with art (e.g., paintings, sculpture), and only 16.09% (19 students) were at least somewhat familiar with German artists. It is of interest to note that more than half (61.86%) of all students reported that they at least somewhat enjoyed going to art museums or galleries, and 28.81% had never been

to an art museum. Given that the majority of students (57.62%) were not familiar at all with German art and artists, and 31.35% were not at all familiar with art in general, it is likely that many students would not have chosen to visit an art museum on their own. It is also interesting that in comparison to the results with student familiarity with classical music, more students reported being familiar with art than music.

When comparing student responses regarding classical music and opera from the beginning of the semester (Table 1) to those of the end of the semester after learning about German composers and attending a German opera, almost all students (97.45%) reported that they were somewhat, very, or extremely familiar with classical music and operas by German composers. This was a significant increase from the beginning of the semester, when only 12.71% of students reported that they were somewhat or very familiar with opera, and 11.01% reported that they enjoyed attending the opera. At the end of the semester, 97.45% reported that they enjoyed going to the opera, and 92.36% reported that they were likely to attend an opera on their own. In addition, 90.67% reported that they were at least somewhat confident that they could speak with a native speaker about German opera.

Comparing student responses regarding art and German artists from the beginning of the semester to those at the end of the semester, it is encouraging that 98.29% of students reported that they were very likely to visit an art museum on their own and that 90.66% of students reported that they were at least somewhat confident that they could talk with a German native speaker about German paintings. The percentages for responses were higher than those from the beginning of the semester. At the beginning of the course, more than half of students reported that they were at least somewhat likely to visit an art museum compared to almost all students (98.29%) at the end of the semester. After learning about German art and artists over the course of a semester, students were more likely to visit an art museum and talk with a native speaker about German art than before the course.

In their responses to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire at the end of the semester (Table 2), students expressed their thoughts and knowledge about what they had learned through readings, presentations, the museum visit, and the opera performance in English. For the purpose of discussing the results of the qualitative portion of the questionnaire, the similar categories for art and music were combined. Percentages of students who included a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph related to each category are listed for each category below. In addition, some comments students wrote in their responses to open-ended questions shed light on how much they had learned throughout the semester as Novice-level students of German about German art and music. All of the comments students wrote at the end of the semester were positive. Representative comments in support of each category are included below.



**Table 1.** Results of Preliminary Student Questionnaire (n = 118)

Preliminary questionnaire	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	NA (never been)
1. How familiar are you with classical musical performances?	6 (5.08%)	17 (14.4%)	41 (34.74%)	33 (27.96%)	21 (17.79%)	0
2. How familiar are you with symphonies?	11 (9.32%)	22 (18.64%)	35 (29.66%)	33 (27.96%)	17 (14.4%)	0
3. How familiar are you with opera?	71 (60.16%)	32 (27.11%)	9 (7.63%)	6 (5.08%)	0	0
4. How much do you enjoy going to the symphony?	0	22 (18.64%)	44 (37.28%)	31 (26.27%)	4 (3.39%)	17 (14.4%)
5. How much do you enjoy going to the opera?	0	36 (30.5%)	7 (5.93%)	10 (8.47%)	3 (2.54%)	62 (52.54%)
6. How familiar are you with classical music by German composers (Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, etc.)?	2 (1.69%)	54 (45.76%)	48 (40.67%)	14 (11.86%)	0	0
7. How familiar are you with operas by German composers (Mozart, Johann Strauss, Jr., etc.)?	73 (61.86%)	35 (29.66%)	8 (6.78%)	2 (1.69%)	0	0
8. How familiar are you with art (paintings, sculpture, etc.)?	37 (31.35%)	29 (24.57%)	33 (27.96%)	13 (11.01%)	6 (5.08%)	0
9. How much do you enjoy going to art museums or galleries?	0	11 (9.32%)	38 (32.2%)	26 (22.03%)	9 (7.63%)	34 (28.81%)
10. How familiar are you with German artists and paintings?	68 (57.62%)	31 (26.27%)	8 (6.78%)	6 (5.08%)	5 (4.23%)	0

**Table 2.** *Results of End-of-Semester Student Questionnaire (n=118)*

<b>End-of-semester questionnaire</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>Extremely</b>
1. How familiar are you with classical music and operas by German composers (Mozart, Johann Strauss, Jr., etc.)?	0	3 (2.54%)	38 (32.2%)	68 (57.62%)	9 (7.63%)
2. How much do you enjoy going to the opera?	0	3 (2.54%)	31 (26.27%)	41 (34.74%)	43 (36.44%)
3. How familiar are you with paintings by German artists?	0	2 (1.69%)	32 (27.11%)	66 (55.93%)	18 (15.25%)
4. How much do you enjoy going to art museums?	0	1 (0.85%)	2 (1.69%)	51 (43.22%)	64 (54.23%)
5. How likely are you to attend an opera on your own?	0	7 (5.93%)	2 (1.69%)	87 (73.72%)	22 (18.64%)
6. How likely are you to visit an art museum on your own?	0	2 (1.69%)	4 (3.39%)	49 (41.52%)	63 (53.38%)
7. How confident are you that you could talk with a German about German classical music (e.g., opera)?	0	12 (10.16%)	66 (55.93%)	34 (28.81%)	7 (5.93%)
8. How confident are you that you could talk with a German about German paintings?	0	11 (9.32%)	72 (61.01%)	23 (19.49%)	12 (10.16%)

*Improved understanding and appreciation through learning about an artist or composer*

In responses to the open-ended questions, the majority of students mentioned that learning about an artist (73.72%) or composer (84.74%) helped them understand and appreciate the work of art better than if they had not learned about the artist or composer. One 18-year-old male student wrote, “By learning about [Heinrich] Hofmann’s life, I felt like I understood why he painted the subjects he did. I also understand what his life was like at the time he painted.” And one 19-year-old female student commented,

Now I know why my mom wanted me to learn about classical music when I was younger. There is something about understanding the life of a composer and then learning about his music. It helps me see the world through different eyes. I almost feel like I know the composer personally.

These two student comments shed light on the number of students who reported that learning about an artist or composer helped them understand and appreciate a work. By learning about the life of the artist or composer, these two students felt like they had a better understanding of and appreciation for the work of art or opera.

*Improved understanding and appreciation through learning about historical context*

The majority of students wrote that learning about the historical context surrounding a work and its artist (67.7%) or composer (78%) helped them understand and appreciate the work more than if they had not learned about the historical context in advance. Two male students, aged 20 and 22, described their experiences.

It was really cool to learn about [Heinrich] Hofmann’s life. His family was really into art. His mom taught art lessons, and his four brothers were also artists. Heinrich [Hofmann] was the only one in the family to go on to become a real artist though. After his mother died, he was inspired to paint religious art. His religious paintings are what made him famous.

I had never considered going to the opera before I took German. It never appealed to me. Now I know why. I had never learned anything about opera! Now that I have learned about Johann Strauss, Jr. and *Die Fledermaus* [The Bat] and what was going on in Vienna at the time, I have learned how important it is to understand a musical composition to gain greater enjoyment from a performance of it.

It is encouraging that students reported that learning about the historical context of an artist and a composer assisted them in better understanding what was going on at the time each work was produced. Fewer students, but still the majority, agreed that learning about what was going on in the life of the artist or composer helped them appreciate the work when they learned about it.

*Improved understanding and appreciation through understanding intentions*

The majority of students wrote that understanding the artist's (78%) or composer's (67.7%) intentions helped them understand and appreciate the work more than not learning about it in advance. Two students made the following comments about their experiences.

Strauss wrote the music for *Die Fledermaus* [The Bat] after his lyricist received a German translation of a French floorshow play that was loosely based on a German play called *The Prison*. The French added a wild New Year's Eve dinner party scene, and it was replaced with a ball because the party wasn't considered to be suitable for a Viennese audience. This opera has become a favorite among the Viennese, and it's performed every New Year's Eve." (Female student, age 19)

Hofmann started painting scenes from the life of Jesus shortly after his mother died. Up until then, he had painted a lot of portraits and scenes. His first religious painting was *Burial of Christ*, and it was inspired by the burial of his own mother. He devoted the rest of his life to paintings about Jesus. He even went to Italy to study with religious artists." (Male student, age 19)

Understanding the artist's or composer's intentions for the painting or opera helped students understand and appreciate works of art better than if they had not. Recognizing the reasons a work of art or opera was created can assist students in their overall appreciation for the painting or opera.

*Experiencing a work of art or opera performance*

The overwhelming majority of students wrote that seeing a work of art in person (94.4%) or attending a live performance of an opera (78%) was more meaningful than through a print or recording. Several student quotes highlight the importance of going to the art museum and opera.

My girlfriend asks me every weekend to take her to an art museum or gallery. I never understood why. Now I do. I don't have to be an art history major to enjoy art. I learned from the director of the art museum that it is important to see an original painting. When I saw a painting by Heinrich Hofmann, I felt so happy. I was in awe of the greatness of the painting *Christ and the Rich Young Ruler*. Hofmann was a genius. (Male student, age 21)

Seeing an original work of art is a spiritual experience. I did not understand the significance of seeing an original of a work of art. I thought a reprint would be just as good. I looked at the originals with 'new eyes' and saw things I hadn't noticed in copies. (Female student, age 18)

When I was in the room with an original painting by a great German painter, a feeling I can't explain came over me. I was encompassed by the greatness of the painting and had a new appreciation of the artist and his life. (Male student, age 21)

When I saw the painting *Christ in Gethsemane* by Heinrich Hofmann, I almost wept. I am not particularly religious, but I somehow felt a connection to Hofmann as the creator of this amazing work of art. Because I knew why Hofmann was painting at the time and because I had learned important things about this painting before viewing the original, I was overcome by the magnitude of this piece of art. I hope never to view an original painting again without learning about its creator first! (Female student, age 19)

I dreaded going to the opera. I have never wanted to go to the opera. I couldn't imagine I would enjoy it at all. But I am so happy I went. I loved it. I feel like a different person after the opera. My mind has been opened to the beauty of German opera, and I will never be the same. (Male student, age 20)

In their questionnaire responses, students identified how they were impacted in positive ways by seeing a work of art in person and attending a live performance of an opera, which they had studied prior to the visit or performance. Students' understanding of cultural products, paintings and opera, was increased due to their study of the cultural practices and perspectives associated with these products. Based on these quotes, preparing students to visit a museum or attend an opera impacts their experience positively. These students likely would not have had such significant experiences viewing an original work of art or attending a live performance of an opera had they not been prepared in advance.

## Discussion

The research question for this study was: To what extent can Novice-level learners of German increase their cultural knowledge over the course of one semester with a focus on German classical music (including opera) and German art and artists? The basic answer is that they can learn a great deal. The comments made by students corroborate their responses to the Likert-type questionnaire items on the end of the semester survey. The majority of the students enjoyed their art museum visit and opera performance attendance, and they plan to visit the museum and attend an opera again in the future. What was particularly inspiring about student responses to open-ended questions is the transformative nature of students' comments about their semester-long experiences with art and classical music in German cultural history.

The majority of the students reported that they now understand the importance of art and classical music in their language learning experience and overall educational development, and they plan to seek out opportunities on their own to visit art museums (96%) and attend classical music performances (93%) on their own. These results are in line with the *World-readiness standards for learning languages* that stress the need for world language students to understand and appreciate the relationship between a culture's perspectives and its products and to develop their own thoughts about cultural products and deepen their language learning experience (NSCB, 2015). Visiting an art museum or attending a live classical music performance without receiving a grade indicates that these students might become lifelong learners of the German language and culture, which is an integral component of the *Communities* Goal Area of the *World-readiness standards for*

*learning languages* (NSCB, 2015). These results are also in line with Glisan and Donato's (2017) claim that "[r]eflecting on culture and conducting cultural investigations...moves education closer to developing informed individuals who can operate with awareness and insight across languages and cultural boundaries" (p. 132).

From reading the end-of-semester student responses, as a result of participating in fieldwork outside of the classroom, students learned about the lives and works of significant German artists and composers in German history. They learned museum etiquette and techniques for viewing original works of art. They learned concert etiquette and techniques for watching and listening to opera. These experiences helped them have a more profound understanding of German culture and changed their outlook on the study of the German language. Students were able to learn about Big C cultural products by learning about little C perspectives (e.g., best dress to attend the opera) and practices (e.g., museum and concert etiquette).

### **Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of this study is that students were allowed to write two of the four written portfolio assignments in English rather than in German. In light of the *Cultures* standard of the *World-readiness standards for learning languages*, students should use the TL to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and/or products and the perspectives of the cultures studied. The IMAGE Model is an ideal approach to guiding students to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and/or products and the perspectives of the cultures studied while exclusively using the TL; however, the initial lessons on German art and classical music did follow this model. English was used to allow students whose proficiency was between Novice-Mid and Intermediate-Low the chance to express their thoughts and feelings in their native language because the instructors did not believe students could do this in the TL.

For future iterations of this portfolio project, the TL could be used for the entire project to promote intercultural competence and communicative proficiency. A future study could explore the improvement of students' language proficiency while completing the components of a culture portfolio. These proposed studies also could be conducted in Intermediate and Advanced-level language courses to determine the effect learning about art and classical music in the TL could have on overall language proficiency. Another line of research could focus on using the 2017 NCSSFL-ACTFL *Intercultural Communication Can-Do Statements* as part of the assessment for student cultural and intercultural learning as it applies to the fine arts.

In the current study, the first questionnaire focused more on students' attitudes toward music and less on their attitudes toward art. The second questionnaire focused more on students' perceived confidence levels and their likeliness to seek out German classical music and art on their own. In a replication of this study, there would be an equal number of questionnaire items in the first questionnaire

dedicated to music and art, and the first questionnaire also would contain questions regarding students' perceived confidence levels and their likeliness to seek out German classical music and art on their own for comparison to the second questionnaire. If this study were to be replicated, the questionnaires given to students at the beginning and end of the semester would be more congruent.

### **Implications for curriculum and teacher development**

This study could be of interest to teachers looking for concrete ways of integrating the fine arts into their first-year language courses. The culture portfolio used in this study could be adapted for use in second- and third-year university language courses, and secondary world language classrooms. Although actual fieldwork to art museums or attend operas might be difficult or costly, local museums and colleges and universities could be contacted to send a representative to show and explain paintings or to perform excerpts from classical music pieces. Instructors would prepare students in advance for the visitors modifying the approach used in this study. In settings where students are not able to drive to a museum or performance or do not live in a town with fine arts amenities, teachers could show works of art on posters or on the Internet. Similarly, teachers could integrate virtual fieldwork into curriculum by showing or playing online professional recordings of classical music performances.

This study offered evidence that university-level world language students' understanding and appreciation of the target culture can improve by learning about aspects of the fine arts through readings, class lectures, student presentations, fieldwork, and portfolio assessment. Through carefully designed activities that focus on the fine arts, students can be inspired to attend cultural events on their own, develop their own thoughts regarding works of art and music in the target culture, make connections between the work of art or musical composition and the world, and deepen their world language learning experience. Universities offer musical performances and admission to museums that are free of charge or very inexpensive to students. Language program directors can work together with student instructors, graduate students, and faculty members across their university to implement a fine arts culture portfolio project into their curricula. Similarly, language teachers could work with local university faculty to implement this type of culture portfolio.

Professional development for teachers using this approach to curriculum and instruction could be similar to the training students received prior to visiting the museum or attending a classical music performance. Teachers may have gained proficiency in the language they teach without learning historical information about works of art or musical compositions. As teachers come to understand the importance of teaching their students to search for information about famous historical figures, provide a context for each figure in historical terms, present the information to their classmates, visit a museum or attend a performance, and reflect on the learning process, teachers can assist their students in appreciating "big C" culture and gaining a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the cultural history of the target culture. They also can see the benefits firsthand of creating campus-

wide communities by collaborating with professors from other departments, the university art museum, and the concert hall.

## Conclusion

The cultural products included in this study, art/artists and musical compositions/composers led students to understand cultural practices associated with visiting museums and attending classical music performances (i.e., what Germans wear to the museum and performances, what happens if one is late to a performance, showing appreciation through applause, standing ovations) and the cultural perspectives of Germans associated with visiting museums and attending musical performances. Even though previous studies using culture portfolios have focused exclusively on student learning about “little c” culture with the intent of increasing student intercultural understanding, for this study students were asked to explore “big C” culture through a culture portfolio, and students gained appreciation for cultural artifacts (e.g., paintings and operas) and understood their historical significance through the lens of “big C” culture while also learning about “little c” culture. Students’ cultural knowledge increased, and they were able to elicit subjective responses through aesthetic appreciation and interpretation in terms of artistic input in the forms of paintings by prominent German artists and musical compositions by prominent German composers.

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## Appendix A: Guidelines for culture portfolio

**Objective:** The purpose of this Culture Portfolio is for you to learn about German artists and composers throughout the course of the semester. There are four assignments you will complete throughout the semester.

### Assignment #1: Artist Assignment

During the first half of the semester, you will learn about six famous German painters. The purpose of this assignment is for you to learn about one German painter whose works are significant in German cultural, political, and social history and to share this information with your classmates. You may use information learned in class by visiting professors and the museum director as well as assigned readings. Following completion of the project, we will visit the Museum of Art as a class to view works by these six painters in person. You will work together in groups of 2-3 to do the following:

1. Choose one painter from the list (Albrecht Dürer, Heinrich Hofmann, Hans Holbein the Younger, Lucas Cranach, Albert Bierstadt, or Max Ernst).
2. Find biographical information (significant dates, accomplishments, significant paintings, photos, etc.) about the painter you chose. Keep a careful record of the sources you cite and include the sources in your paper.
3. Find information about the cultural, political, and social events at the time the painter lived. Keep a careful record of the sources you cite and include the sources in your paper.
4. Prepare a presentation to present the information you found to your classmates. Your goal is to teach your classmates about the painter you chose in preparation for seeing the painter's work in person at the Museum of Art. Use photos, video, etc. Your presentation will be in German.

### Assignment #2: Composer Assignment

During the second half of the semester, you will learn about six famous German composers. The purpose of this assignment is for you to learn about one German composer whose works are significant in German cultural, political, and social history and to share this information with your classmates. You may use information learned in class by visiting professors. Following completion of the project, we will visit one musical performance as a class. You will work together in groups of 2-3 to do the following:

1. Choose one composer from the list (Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Johann Strauss, Jr.).
2. Find biographical information (significant dates, accomplishments, significant compositions, photos, etc.) about the painter you chose. Keep a careful record of the sources you cite and include the sources in your paper.
3. Find information about the cultural, political, and social events at the time the composer lived. Keep a careful record of the sources you cite and

include the sources in your paper.

4. Prepare a presentation to present the information you found to your classmates. Your goal is to teach your classmates about the composer you chose in preparation for our class visit to a live performance featuring the music of your composer. Use music, photos, video, etc. Your presentation will be in German.

#### Assignment #3: Reflective Essay about German Art and Painters

Following the visit to the art museum, write a reflective essay in English about German art and painters. Discuss how at least two paintings by different painters fit into Germany's political and cultural situation at the time the paintings were produced and why you feel that having knowledge about art painted by Germans contributes to your understanding of the German language and culture. Refer to at least two of the six painters we studied this semester (Albrecht Dürer, Heinrich Hofmann, Hans Holbein the Younger, Lucas Cranach, Albert Bierstadt, and Max Ernst).

#### Assignment #4: Reflective Essay about German Music and Composers

Following the opera performance, write a reflective essay in English about German music and composers. Discuss how the opera *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss, Jr. fits into Germany's political and cultural situation at the time the music was produced and why you feel that having knowledge about music composed by Germans contributes to your understanding of the German language and culture. Refer to at least two of the six composers we studied this semester (Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Johann Strauss, Jr.).

**Appendix B: Grading rubric for culture portfolio assignments in German**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Total points: \_\_\_\_\_/40

<b>Category</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations (1)</b>	<b>Almost Meets Expectations (2)</b>	<b>Meets Expectations (3-4)</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations (5)</b>
<b>Required components</b>	The assignment contains less than half of the required components.	The assignment half of the required components.	The assignment more than half, but not all, of the required components.	The assignment contains all of the required components.
<b>Accuracy</b>	The assignment does not demonstrate a degree of accuracy for the student's level of German.	The assignment mostly demonstrates a degree of accuracy for the student's level of German.	The assignment demonstrates a degree of accuracy for the student's level of German.	The assignment demonstrates a degree of accuracy beyond the student's level of German.
<b>Cultural awareness</b>	The assignment does not demonstrate student's effort to understand the importance of art and music in Germany's history.	The assignment mostly demonstrates student's effort to understand the importance of art and music in Germany's history.	The assignment demonstrates student's effort to understand the importance of art and music in Germany's history.	The assignment demonstrates student's ability to understand the importance of art and music in Germany's history.
<b>Use of target vocabulary</b>	The assignment does not demonstrate appropriate and varied vocabulary.	The assignment mostly demonstrates appropriate and varied vocabulary.	The assignment demonstrates appropriate and varied vocabulary.	The assignment demonstrates an advanced level of and varied vocabulary.
<b>Use of target grammar</b>	The assignment does not demonstrate appropriate and varied grammar structures.	The assignment mostly demonstrates appropriate and varied grammar structures.	The assignment demonstrates appropriate and varied grammar structures.	The assignment demonstrates an advanced level of and varied grammar structures.
<b>Writing proficiency</b>	The assignment does not provide evidence for student's progress in written German.	The assignment mostly provides evidence for student's progress in written German.	The assignment provides evidence for student's progress in written German.	The assignment provides evidence for student's excellent progress in written German.

<b>Oral proficiency</b>	The assignment does not provide evidence for student's progress in spoken German.	The assignment mostly provides evidence for student's progress in spoken German.	The assignment provides evidence for student's progress in spoken German.	The assignment provides evidence for student's excellent progress in spoken German.
<b>Reflection</b>	The reflection questions have not been answered in depth.	The reflection questions have mostly been answered in depth.	The reflection questions have been answered in depth.	The reflection questions have been answered in great detail.

**Appendix C: Preliminary student questionnaire** (administered at the beginning of the semester)

Please answer the following questions using this scale below.

1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = somewhat, 4 = very, 5 = extremely, 6 = NA

1. How familiar are you with classical musical performances?
2. How familiar are you with symphonies?
3. How familiar are you with opera?
4. How much do you enjoy going to the symphony?
5. How much do you enjoy going to the opera?
6. How familiar are you with classical music by German composers (Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, etc.)?
7. How familiar are you with operas by German composers (Mozart, Johann Strauss, Jr., etc.)?
8. How familiar are you with art (paintings, sculpture, etc.)?
9. How much do you enjoy going to art museums or galleries?
10. How familiar are you with German artists?

**Appendix D: Student questionnaire** (administered at the end of the semester)

Please answer the following questions. We are very interested in your opinions about the culture portfolio project this semester. Your responses will remain anonymous.

Please answer the following questions using this scale below.

1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = somewhat, 4 = very, 5 = extremely

1. How familiar are you with operas by German composers (Mozart, Johann Strauss, Jr., etc.)?
2. How much do you enjoy going to the opera?
3. How familiar are you with paintings by German artists?
4. How much do you enjoy going to art museums?

5. How likely are you to attend an opera on your own (without your German class)?
6. How likely are you to visit an art museum on your own (without your German class)?
7. How confident are you that you could talk with a German about German classical music (e.g., opera)?
8. How confident are you that you could talk with a German about German paintings?

Please answer the following questions in English.

1. What did you like about the projects that prepared you to go to the opera?
2. What didn't you like about the projects that prepared you to go to the opera?
3. What did you like about the projects that prepared you to visit the art museum?
4. What didn't you like about the projects that prepared you to visit the art museum?
5. What did you learn by preparing to and attending the opera?
6. What did you learn by preparing to and visiting the art museum?
7. Is it important to learn about German classical music in a German class? Why or why not?
8. Describe how you felt and what you thought during the opera performance.
9. Describe how you felt and what you thought during the museum visit.
10. Is it important to learn about German paintings in a German class? Why or why not?
11. Do you feel that your German improved by learning about German music and art? If so, in what ways?
12. What suggestions for improvement would you make for the written assignments?





# **Together at the Table: An Interdisciplinary Short-Term Study Abroad Program**

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## **Abstract**

**S**hort-term faculty-led study abroad (SFSA) programs have been gaining interest of students in intercultural studies and world language programs in higher education. The majority of SFSA programs are created specifically for certain groups of students; however, it seems crucial to provide opportunities for all students to study abroad and develop deeper levels of intercultural awareness and sensitivity to diverse people. This study examined a SFSA program that brings faculty to the table from the Departments of Anthropology, Geography, Political Science, and Languages by investigating the research question: To what extent does the interdisciplinary SFSA program foster students' intercultural learning through ethnographic fieldwork project learning? This qualitative case study examined the developmental trajectories of nine SFSA student participants' intercultural competence in a Midwest university over the spring and summer of 2017. The course included pre-departure class activities in the spring, the study abroad experience in China, and completion of a post-trip fieldwork report in the summer. Data sources included interviews (pre- and post-departure) with each student and the program coordinator, students' assignments, students' fieldwork projects, students' daily reflective journals, the researcher's field notes, and program documents (e.g., website, syllabus). Findings suggest that the biggest success of the program was the opportunity given to students to connect their disciplinary interests to their exploration of the Chinese culture through a fieldwork project. Three themes emerged: (1) interdisciplinary interactions; (2) new understandings of Chinese culture; and (3) intercultural competence. This inclusive SFSA program model provides implications for future design of study

abroad programs and research focused on meeting the demand for creating global connections in higher education.

*Keywords:* short-term faculty-led study abroad, intercultural learning, interdisciplinary

**Introduction**

Connecting the world through study abroad (SA) is an emerging pedagogical trend in U.S. higher education curricula (Mule, Audley, & Aloisio, 2018). According to the Institute for International Education (2018), the number of college students who study abroad has been increasing. During 2016-2017, 332,727 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit with their home institutions. Among the various types of programs, short-term SA programs have risen the most rapidly, while long-term study abroad has decreased (Table 1). Recent studies have indicated that 64.6% of students who studied abroad in 2016-17 chose short-term programs, defined as one to eight weeks in education (Institute for International Education, 2018).

**Table 1.** *U.S. Students Studying Abroad by Duration of Study* (adapted from Inside Higher Ed., 2018)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Short-term</b> (summer or eight weeks or fewer)	174,513	189,074	197,883	204,972	214,798
<b>Mid-length</b> (one semester or one or two quarters)	105,634	106,259	107,559	112,126	110,269
<b>Long-term</b> (academic or calendar year)	9,261	9,134	7,973	8,241	7,660
Total	289,408	304,467	313,415	325,339	332,727

Traditionally, language majors have participated in SA programs with the goal of polishing their language skills, but recent studies have shown that SFSA programs have grown significantly across disciplines outside of world language and international studies programs in higher education (Inside Higher Ed, 2018). Thus, this study investigated how SFSA programs might provide learning opportunities to students. In particular, the following research question was examined for this study: To what extent does the interdisciplinary SFSA program foster students' intercultural learning through ethnographic fieldwork project learning?

This paper begins by providing a review of the literature on SFSA programs. Then, a curriculum design for intercultural learning is provided. Next, the rationale

to integrate an ethnographic fieldwork project into the SFSA course is explained. A brief introduction of the SFSA program at Star University, and the design of this empirical research follow. Then, the findings are presented according to the major themes. Finally, implications for future directions of the SFSA program in higher education are discussed.

## Literature review

### *Short-term faculty-led study abroad programs*

A short-term faculty-led study abroad (SFSA) program is defined as “a credit-granting college-level study abroad program where faculty accompany students from their universities as teachers and trip leaders” (Keese & O’Brien, 2011, p.5). SFSA programs in higher education might be gaining popularity due to the limited time or financial means for students and faculty to participate in long-term programs (Gaia, 2015). Even though SFSA programs’ curriculum typically are created based on the concept of global connectedness, each program might vary depending on who the participants are, what the learning goals are, and how students are assessed by faculty. Some SFSA programs are for language learners, business students, or students from the schools of social work and nursing (Bai, Larimer, & Riner, 2016; Gonglewski & Helm, 2017; Gullekson, Tucker, Coombs, & Wright, 2011; Jackson, 2006; Reisinger, 2013). The desired learning outcomes might relate to language skills, professional development, intercultural competence, and global awareness (Bai et al., 2016; Gonglewski & Helm, 2017; Jackson, 2006; Kurt, Olitsky, & Geis, 2013; Tack & Carney, 2018; Wang, Peyvandi, & Coffey, 2014). Moreover, the faculty initiate, control, and administer programs differently to reach learning outcomes during the course. For example, some incorporate experiential learning, transformative learning, service learning, intercultural learning, and/or research-based learning (Barkin, 2016; Coryell, Stewart, Wubbena, Valverde-Poenie, & Spencer, 2016; Di Gregorio, 2015; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Graham & Crawford, 2012; Pilon, 2017; Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2016).

### *A curriculum design for intercultural learning*

In line with global connectedness, universities often include intercultural competence in their study abroad curriculum to cultivate students who are internationally minded (Pilon, 2017) due to “its immediate practical reference” (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017, p. 14). There are several different concepts of intercultural competence in the literature. Deardorff (2006) discussed the discrepancy between definitions and assessment methods of intercultural competence with intercultural scholars and higher education administrators, and summarized the components of intercultural competence agreed on by scholars. Deardorff (2006) defines intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 247-248). Deardorff’s concept of intercultural competence is important for two reasons: (1) it is a definition commonly accepted by intercultural scholars and administrators, and (2) it outlines relationships among knowledge, skills, and attitudes, rather than on students’ linguistic gains.

Simply being exposed to the target language and cultural environment does not ensure that participants will enhance their intercultural competence, so designing a carefully guided curriculum is essential (Jackson, 2011; Bai et al, 2016). Lo-Philip, Carroll, Tan, Ann, Tan, and Seow (2015) found that integrating an ethnographic fieldwork project was particularly suitable for developing intercultural competence in a study abroad setting. They discovered that ethnographic research methods required frequent and intensive interaction with locals in order to get a deep understanding of how local people thought, believed, and behaved. Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan and Street (2001) also indicated that an ethnographic approach assists in the development of intercultural competence, “[I]t involves learners in a type of interaction with people of another language and society, which makes them conscious of and reflexive about cross-cultural relationships by engaging them directly with the local and the specific” (p. 242).

Specifically, engaging in an ethnographic fieldwork project gives students insights, through lived experiences, into the host country where they are able to explore their own intercultural competence. Deardorff (2009) asserts, acquisition of intercultural competence is an ongoing process, and “thus it becomes important for individuals to be provided with opportunities to reflect upon and assess the development of their own intercultural competence” (p. 479). In study abroad contexts, findings on the use of ethnographic methods for assessment, such as a fieldwork report, have shown that students can become highly involved in the host country, develop a strong interest in intercultural exchange, and further foster their intercultural learning (Gmelch & Gmelch, 1999; Jackson, 2006, 2008; Roberts et al., 2001). Jackson (2006) incorporated an ethnographic fieldwork project into a SFSA program for world language majors, and students demonstrated growth in understanding of their culture and the foreign culture, and they appreciated this intercultural learning.

### **The SFSA program in China at Star University**

The overarching goal of the SFSA program at Star University (a pseudonym) to China was to create an inclusive curriculum for students with different academic majors where they would learn about how their disciplines related to Chinese studies and broaden their global understanding through a study abroad experience. Finding common ground for this interdisciplinary collaboration was the main task to operate the SFSA program. In doing so, the SFSA program brought faculty with Chinese background from various departments to the table, and I was recruited as the program co-coordinator. Table 2 summarizes each faculty member’s expertise and contributions to the program. Regardless of their fields, students were able to learn, engage, and interact at a professional level. These faculty members aimed to further enhance their intercultural competence. Arasaratnam-Smith (2017) advocates “[t]he more we can draw from multiple disciplinary, cultural, and linguistic perspectives, the richer our understanding of intercultural competence” (p. 16). In addition to faculty involvement, Chinese students from our sister school in Shanghai were paired up with our students to facilitate students’ intercultural learning. This was arranged by the director of the American Cultural Center and the Coordinator (Guest lecturer V).

**Table 2.** *Star University's SFSA program to China Faculty*

Faculty	Department	Contributions
Coordinator	Anthropology	Provided students with an anthropological way of viewing the cultural differences the students might encounter.
Co-Coordinator	Languages	Provided an overview of how Mandarin is structured and taught phrases that might be useful in China.
Guest lecturer I	Political Science	Addressed the political structures of China.
Guest lecturer II	Political Science	Provided information about research methods applicable to fieldwork projects in China.
Guest lecturer III	Accountancy (Emeritus)	Founder of the program, led the program for more than a decade, and has a wealth of knowledge about China.
Guest lecturer IV	Geography	Provided a general overview of the geography of China, especially Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai where the students traveled.
Guest lecturer V	The director of the American Cultural Center at our sister school in Shanghai, China.	Provided information on how the sister school could assist students in enhancing their intercultural learning in China.

The pre-departure course, time spent abroad, and the ethnographic fieldwork report were integrated into the SFSA program in China at Star University in order to document students' development of their intercultural learning (Pilon, 2017). Specifically, we incorporated three three-credit courses in three different settings over Spring and Summer 2017: (1) a classroom training on ethnographic methods in spring; (2) study abroad to China where individual students carried out their ethnographic fieldwork projects in China (from mid-May to early June); and (3) a post-trip fieldwork report that required written analysis on findings in summer (from mid-June to early August). The three components of the SFSA program are explained in detail in the following sections.

#### *Pre-departure preparation*

As recommended in the literature, the SFSA program in China at Star University included the intentional pre-departure preparation course in Spring 2017 to develop students' intercultural awareness and appreciation (Bai et al, 2016; Gonglewski & Helm, 2017; Gorka & Niesenbaum, 2001). The three-credit pre-departure preparation course was scheduled twice a week, 75 minutes each, and the focus was on understanding ethnographic methods (Jackson, 2006). The instructor, who was also the program coordinator, was responsible for preparing

students to complete the ethnographic fieldwork project upon their return from China. For the course, each student had to select a research topic that they were interested in, or that was related to their discipline. They conducted an annotated bibliography of their topic, developed their research design to make it feasible when collecting data through interviews and observations in China, and presented their chosen topic in class. Table 3 summarizes the timeline for the pre-departure course. During the course, students were given ongoing feedback on their assignments and provided with guidance on how to further refine their projects by the coordinator. The coordinator also provided students with reflections and discussions on books and videos to expose them with a variety of course materials about the Chinese culture in order to facilitate their cross-cultural understanding.

**Table 3.** *Timeline for Pre-Departure Course for Spring 2017*

Timeline	Course Assignment
1/24	Think about potential fieldwork topics and discuss them with the Coordinator.
1/31	After doing some preliminary research on your chosen topic area, write a preliminary project proposal (at least 600 words). Read as much as you can about your topic, using scholarly journals and books in addition to websites.
2/16	Create an Annotated Bibliography I.
2/28	Create an Annotated Bibliography II.
3/9	Draft a preliminary fieldwork plan.
3/31	Meet with the Program Coordinator and Co-Coordinator to discuss your plan.
4/25	Write your final fieldwork plan.
4/27, 5/2, 5/4	Deliver your presentation on your final fieldwork plan.

*Study abroad in China*

After the spring pre-departure course, the students traveled with the program coordinator and co-coordinator to China for three weeks (from mid-May to early June). This also was a three-credit course. We visited Beijing (nine days), Xi'an (four days), and Shanghai (nine days). There was a three-day group excursion in Beijing, and a two-day group excursion in Xi'an, where a local tour guide assisted us in exploring the cultural and historical contexts of China. The program coordinator scheduled two school visits to two different colleges in Beijing where students presented and discussed their fieldwork projects with Chinese students and faculty. Students conducted their ethnographic research through interviews and observations during their free time. Most of the ethnographic data were collected in Shanghai because it is where our sister school is located, and the Chinese students were open to collaborating with the U.S. students. Students wrote in

daily journals focused on their fieldwork projects to document their intercultural learning. The program coordinator and co-coordinator provided feedback on students' ethnographic fieldwork projects during their daily breakfast meetings with individual students to facilitate critical reflection about their intercultural learning. During these meetings, the program coordinator and co-coordinator also provided help with students' daily life if they encountered any difficulties. Beyond the time spent in program activities, the students were free to participate in other extracurricular activities (e.g., visit parks, play basketball, paddle boats).

#### *Fieldwork report*

After going to China, each student was required to sign up for a three-credit online course and write a fieldwork report (5,000 to 10,000 words) based on the ethnographic research they conducted (Appendix A). The coordinator provided students with office hours during which they could get feedback on their rough drafts before the first draft of the report was due in July. Then, each student received a classmate's paper assigned by the coordinator via email for which students were required to provide constructive feedback on that paper. The students emailed the feedback to their classmate and the coordinator within a week. Lastly, the students revised their papers based on the feedback they got from their classmates and the coordinator and submitted their final drafts in August.

#### **Methodology**

My role as a researcher and program co-coordinator permitted me with the opportunity to discuss the curriculum with the coordinator, who was the instructor of the pre-departure course. My position as the program co-coordinator allowed me to have an insider perspective on the SFSA program to design this empirical research, and it afforded me close contact with the students to understand their perspectives on ethnographic learning. Considering the ethnographic experience on students' intercultural learning in this study, I utilized a qualitative approach to examine the developmental trajectories of these SFSA student participants' intercultural learning and engagement (Gmelch & Gmelch, 1999; Jackson, 2006, 2011; Roberts et al., 2001).

#### *Participants*

Among the 13 students who enrolled in the SFSA course, nine undergraduate students consented to participate in this study, including six males and three females, aged between 19 and 24. Table 4 provides background information of the participants. All the participants were native speakers of English, but only five had one year or more of Chinese language learning experience at the university. For the sake of anonymity, pseudonyms are used to refer to the participants.

**Table 4.** *Background Information of Participants*

Students	Age & Ethnicity	Year in university	Major	Minor	Chinese
Amy	20 Caucasian	Junior	History & Political Science	Math	None
Andy	20 Caucasian	Junior	German & International Studies	Political Science	None
Bella	19 Caucasian	Sophomore	Human resource management	N/A	None
James	20 Asian (Hmong)	Junior	Management	Marketing	None
Kelly	22 Caucasian	Senior	Visual arts	Chinese Studies, Political Science & History	1 year
Lucas	20 Caucasian	Sophomore	History & political science	Chinese Studies	3 semesters
Mark	24 Caucasian	Junior	Chinese Studies	N/A	1 year
Nathan	23 Caucasian	Senior	Graphic design	Chinese Studies	1 year
Sam	21 Caucasian	Junior	Chinese Studies & political science	Chinese business	1 year

The program coordinator also agreed to participate in this study to help provide information on students' intercultural learning and the program design. This was her second time leading the SFSA program. As a trained anthropologist, she designed the curriculum by integrating the ethnographic fieldwork project to welcome students from all majors to participate, and she recruited faculty who had Chinese background to teach classes during the pre-departure course.

#### *Data collection*

Data collection occurred from January to August 2017, during pre-departure class activities in the spring, the study abroad experience in China, and the on-line summer course during which students completed the fieldwork report. Utilizing a qualitative approach, I collected data from multiple sources and multiple participants, which allowed for triangulation (Maxwell, 2012). Data from students included interviews (pre- and post-departure), assignments, daily reflective journal entries, and fieldwork reports. In order to understand the students' pre- and post- departure perspectives on their intercultural learning, I conducted



semi-structured interviews in my office twice with each student, once before the trip in early May (Appendix B), and again after the trip in August (Appendix C). The length of each interview lasted 30 to 60 minutes, and all the interviews were recorded. Students' class assignments, which I collected via email during the spring semester, also were included as data in order to track their intercultural learning at various stages. I also collected the students' daily reflective journal entries through email or hard copy when I conducted the post-trip interviews in August. There were no prompts given to students to guide their writing for the journals. Students were asked to reflect on their intercultural learning related to their fieldwork projects while abroad, and they also were encouraged to write about their international experiences on various circumstances, such as ideas and questions generated from their interactions with locals and peers. I collected students' fieldwork reports at the end of the summer course.

Additionally, I interviewed the program coordinator twice (pre- and post-departure) to gain additional insight about the students' intercultural learning and program curriculum design. As the program co-coordinator and researcher, I kept field notes when observing students' intercultural learning in the spring class meetings and while abroad in summer. Lastly, the program documents (e.g., brochure, syllabus, website) were examined to understand the program design and goals.

#### *Data analysis*

The purpose of this study was to better understand the intercultural development of the 2017 cohort over an 8-month period. To accomplish this, first, I transcribed all the audio-recorded interviews. Once the data had been transcribed, I created a separate file for each student. I then organized each student's file chronologically. Next, I compared and contrasted students' assignments, journals, and fieldwork reports to track the developmental trajectories of the participants' intercultural learning throughout the program.

Drawing from previous research on the students' ethnographic preparation and experiences, all the data were coded for recurrent themes in which the students identified positive experiences with the SFSA program (Cortazzi, 2001; Jackson, 2006; Lo-Philip, et al., 2015). I compared these themes across each student and common themes were generated. To achieve triangulation, students' claims were compared and contrasted with other sources of data, including the interviews with the program coordinator, the researcher's field notes, and the program documents (Maxwell, 2012). The results are presented through "thick description" of these data (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 547).

### **Findings**

The findings of the present study yielded three significant themes: (1) interdisciplinary interactions; (2) new understandings of Chinese culture; and (3) intercultural competence and education. In this section, these three themes will be presented respectively on how the interdisciplinary SFSA program fostered the students' intercultural learning.

*Interdisciplinary interactions*

Interactions between students and faculty across disciplines were highlighted frequently in students' data, as "[t]he program is open to all students, regardless of major" (the program website). In the post-trip interview, Kelly, an art major, identified ethnographic fieldwork project learning as the "best" way to engage all students across disciplines.

Fieldwork project learning is really the best thing you can do [for such diverse students]. If I were going with the art students, just purely with the art students, there were things that I would do differently, of course. It would be an art project, as oppose to a fieldwork project.

With such diverse students involved, students repeatedly mentioned how much they appreciated the program's openness to accommodate each student's academic background by allowing them to choose a research topic for their ethnographic fieldwork project that connected to their own interest and related to their major and/or minor. In their post-trip interviews, Sam commented, "It's good to choose your own projects .... You learn more about China," and James said, "[Conducting the fieldwork project] benefits me educationally because I am a marketing major. It definitely expands my mind more...about marketing in the general sense and more specifically in the international sense. So, it definitely benefit me educationally."

The significant role that faculty played was mentioned repeatedly, referring to when students were searching for an appropriate topic for their own ethnographic fieldwork projects. Sam changed his research topic three times, as he explained in his post-trip interview, "[Guest lecturer IV] shut down my first project and [the program co-coordinator] shut down my second project." Even though Sam showed frustration when creating in the post-trip interview, though not as frustrated as Sam, and said "the program coordinator told me to narrow down my project [from marketing to how Chinese culture shapes the fashion in retail stores] and I pretty much completed it as I planned."

In addition to gaining different perspectives from their professors, students agreed that their peers helped them with project development. In her post-trip interview, Bella discussed how she benefited from interdisciplinary interaction to finalize her research topic through discussions with her classmate.

I was talking with [my classmate] about the new topic because I didn't like my project [on education] before as much. The project was not exciting. She was like giving out ideas, and we came out with it together. It's fun and relatively easy to get information by going to the restaurants.

When I met Bella during the project discussion meeting in March, she confessed that she did not know how to pick a topic. I noted in my field notes that she chose "education" because it was a topic with which she was familiar and it tied to her life. In addition to providing comments, the coordinator and I encouraged her to discuss her topic with her academic advisor or classmates. She hesitated to reach out to her classmates because she was afraid that she might steal her classmates' research ideas (field notes). She finally decided to turn to one of her classmates

for help, who also was her roommate, and she decided on the new topic “Product localization of Western fast food chains in China.” Through the discussion with her classmate, Bella realized that she benefited a lot from peer learning, especially because her classmate, who majored in Public Affairs, was also from the College of Business. By collaborating with her classmate, she was able to work on the topic that related to her major in the business field and her interest in fast food.

Students also mentioned that interacting with faculty who had Chinese background was essential for them to understand Chinese history and cultural norms and before they traveled abroad. James commented in his pre-departure interview, “The most useful skills and information I learned from [guest lecturers] were understanding certain Chinese practices that Americans should be aware of when adventuring out over there. We don’t look too bad as foreigners.” Amy wrote in her fieldwork report about how she gained new insights on communism by listening to Guest Lecturer I in the spring class and changed her perspective toward communism. This experience encouraged Amy to reevaluate how she viewed communism and get ready to immerse herself in a communist community to conduct her fieldwork project.

Growing up in the society I was born into naturally taught me certain values and even some wrong notions such as the idea that communism should be hated...but, a very memorable line that changed my perspective over freedom throughout the world comes from [Guest Lecturer I] in regards to Russia: Democracy is nice, eating is better.

The importance of the interactions with classmates from various majors was mentioned by students. Nathan, who was a Chinese studies minor and spoke some Chinese, was frequently mentioned during the post-trip interviews when the students recalled their experience abroad on speaking Chinese. James identified himself as “Asian,” but he did not speak Chinese, and he was often expected to speak Chinese to Chinese people during the trip. In his post-trip interview, he explained that this bothered him a lot,

When [Chinese people] look at me, they think that I am Chinese. They think that I should speak Chinese. It discourages me because I felt like that I should know how to speak Chinese, but in reality, you know, I don’t, you know, it is not my culture.

Nathan offered to help right after he learned that James was suffering from this misunderstanding. In the post-trip interview, James reflected on how Nathan helped him.

I was telling [Nathan] that I had problems because Chinese people always think that I speak Chinese. [Nathan] taught me that there are some key phrases you can say. I said thanks. I will be sure to use this. I used *wo bu dong* [I don’t understand] a lot.

Nathan was the only student in the SFSA program who spoke Chinese to the co-coordinator and expressed interest in learning useful expressions while in China (field notes). By learning Chinese, he assisted his classmates as needed. For example,

in her post-trip interview, Amy discussed how Nathan assisted classmates in China.

It was in Pizza Hut. Lucas got a pizza. He got cheese pizza. They gave him something like a bunch of things on it. You know, he is not gonna eat this. He is so picky. Nathan was like, okay, let's try to fix it. Lucas said, No, it's fine. Nathan was like, let's try this and see if we can say, This is the wrong pizza. Can we take that back? They ended up finally understanding that it was wrong.

This incident influenced Amy's attitudes toward speaking Chinese significantly, as she, a student with no Chinese background, was excited to share how proud she was when she communicated successfully with Chinese people. In her post-trip interview, she reflected,

I did learn a little bit, tried to use Chinese.... There were a couple of things when people had trouble, I knew how to help, so that was helpful. Like [classmate] was trying to get tea. I was like, I knew that word, so he started to look at me for the rest of the time, as if I knew how to speak the language.

Amy also said she was proud that she could "overcome language barriers" and complete her fieldwork project.

Students also believed they benefited from working with peers when they returned from China and worked on their fieldwork project reports in summer. In Sam's fieldwork report, he noted,

Moving into my review of the literature, the only significant criticism I received was that I present the "westernization of the Chinese diet through a negative lens." My peer suggested that I try to touch on issues such as the decrease of food borne illness, the increase in food security.... If I were to write another paper on the topic, I would try to highlight the benefits that westernization has brought.

Many students reported that they were challenged by the newness of the ethnographic fieldwork project, particularly where they were required to reflect on and analyze aspects of their own and others' culture and worldview. This intercultural learning process was overwhelming at times since students received feedback from several different perspectives for every single detail of the project. With the gradual exposure to the fieldwork development as well as the help from the faculty and peers, students were able to synthesize the data they gathered in China and therefore complete their research work.

These examples demonstrate how the students benefited from interactions among faculty and peers across disciplines. In China, the interconnectedness of various disciplines, such as business, geography, language, culture, and political science became apparent in just about everything students did. Faculty and students were able to contribute to the program by sharing their own perspectives and foster their intercultural learning.

*New understandings of Chinese culture*

When I asked students “Why do you want to join in this study abroad program?” during the pre-departure interview, students stated the following. “China is so different. I want to be outside of my comfort zone. It’s more beneficial compared to the places I am more familiar with” (Amy). “I have never been to China... something completely different from the U.S.” (Bella). “I want to experience China, a new culture and place” (Andy). Due to their unfamiliarity with China, and their perceived differences of China and the U.S., students used the word “new” repeatedly in the data. However, the new understandings of Chinese culture that students claimed that they acquired seemed superficial. For instance, during the pre-departure course, Bella wrote in her book reflection assignment,

Overall, this book, *Kosher Chinese*, is very interesting and it makes me excited to explore a new culture. There will be new and quite different things that I will try and see like Michael Levy (the author) has, but it will certainly be a new experience that I am looking forward to.

Before going to China, the way that most students, like Bella, reflected on their new understandings of Chinese culture was very descriptive instead of analytical (field notes). Specifically, most students used “interesting” and “cool” to summarize the readings.

When conducting the ethnographic fieldwork project in China, in my field notes I wrote about how the students often mentioned how little they knew about Chinese culture, but how much Chinese people knew about U.S. culture. Specifically, all the students expressed that they were still shocked by the “new” understandings of Chinese culture they experienced through real-world interaction in which they gained an insider perspective. Nathan’s fieldwork project focused on the way graphic design “differed” between China and the U.S. in the hopes of understanding how culture shapes our understanding of the same graphic design. Although the co-coordinator inquired about their “similarities” during the meeting in March, Nathan resisted changing his preconceived notions about what he would find in China since he believed Chinese culture was so different from U.S. culture. However, Nathan noted in his fieldwork report that his biggest challenge was reconciling his preconceived notions of China with the information he learned from locals. He was convinced gradually that there was not that much difference between graphic design in China and the U.S. Viewing his pre-departure research as useless, he experienced extreme frustration. In China, when he began to discuss his training in the arts with locals and investigate the trends and popular styles he found in Chinese graphic design, such as posters, billboards, brochures, and digital advertisement, he acknowledged the graphic design he found in China was new, exciting and as promising as what he knew in the U.S.

In my field notes, I recorded several times that students expressed that they had to research more when they returned from China because they were developing new understandings of Chinese culture. For instance, Lucas, who wanted to be a middle/high school history teacher after he graduated from the university, wrote in his preliminary fieldwork plan about cultural differences in China with respect to authority.

Chinese culture differs significantly from that of the ‘Western’ culture.... It would seem that cultural elements such as respect for authority are different .... My hopes for this project would be to see these different attitudes towards elders and how authority manifests itself in the classroom.

During the study abroad trip, Lucas observed an introductory course in western philosophy at a university in Shanghai. He believed that both the students and faculty would be professional and respectful based on his pre-departure research. However, in his fieldwork report, he noted he was surprised to see that “a large majority of the class was either on their phones or working on other schoolwork.” Lucas wondered what “western philosophy” meant to Chinese college students in Shanghai and how it influences the classroom culture in higher education with such different attitudes he observed.

In addition, I wrote in my field notes that many students were surprised to see how diverse the Chinese culture was during their time abroad in China. Kelly’s fieldwork project focused on Chinese people’s dating and relationships before marriage, as the Chinese gender ratio makes it harder for people to find a marriage partner. In her journal, Kelly discussed how excited she was to learn that one of her contacts in China was a lesbian, who was able to provide her with an in-depth account of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual plus (LGBT+) community.

Through these examples, the students learned that frequent interactions with locals helped them discover new understandings of Chinese culture, and they could not ignore the “sub-cultures” when collecting data for their research projects. Some students were able to experience China’s new social and cultural understandings that have been created in part by its rapidly growing economy. Other students, like Nathan, even noticed that the Chinese and U.S. cultures are more similar than different. Thus, this international experience indeed helped students reflect critically on China’s social and cultural changes.

#### *Intercultural competence*

During their post-trip interviews, students repeatedly expressed that they felt proud of what they had accomplished as they reached the program goal to challenge their assumptions about the world and broaden the depths of their firsthand knowledge. When I asked students to share some examples of their “accomplishment,” the students unanimously mentioned that the ethnographic fieldwork project provided a good platform for them to reflect critically on their intercultural learning and trace their own personal growth on intercultural learning. For each student, I created a table when analyzing their intercultural learning at various stages, noting the feedback I provided them. Table 5 illustrates how one student, Mark, developed his intercultural competence through his ethnographic fieldwork project.

**Table 5.** *Mark's Personal Development of Intercultural Competence*

Timeline	The development of intercultural competence
January: Preliminary Project Statement	I love sports.... I always wondered what sports were popular in China.... Through this project I hope to find out more of the sports world in China.
February: Annotated Bibliography	Physical fitness is an important aspect of life in traditional Chinese culture. China has been known for its martial arts for centuries from martial arts movies to live performances it is truly amazing. This article goes with another one of my project's main points. Sports build bridges between countries and cultures. It also goes into the current trends of soccer in China. <i>Feedback: How are these examples different from American perspectives?</i>
March: Preliminary Project Plan	My goal with this project is to find out as much as I can about the sports industry in China. By the end if this project, I hope to have a better understanding of sports in general in China. <i>Feedback: Please discuss how "Chinese culture" influences Chinese sports.</i>
April: Project Proposal	The NBA is getting big in China, but I also would like to know about other sports that are gaining popularity. <i>Feedback: Good to narrow down to "basketball/NBA." Please discuss how "Chinese culture" plays its role on this popular sport.</i>
August: Final draft of the fieldwork project	A lot of the people I talked to were far more interested in basketball than football.... Another big factor in basketball in China was the emergence Yao Ming.... Along with being very popular in China, he is one of the most recognizable players in the U.S. as well as the rest of the world.... [My contact] knew way more about basketball than I do. Sports also act as a very strong cultural force that can form strong national identity as well as national unity.... This is why the 2008 Olympics in Beijing were so important to China. They were finally able to show the rest of the world their recent economic success.

Since most of the students had little to no previous knowledge about Chinese culture, like Mark, they often did not reflect on how Chinese culture played an influential role on the topic they chose (e.g., sports, education, marriage, Western fast food, etc.). After several revisions in the spring and summer, Mark finally was able to associate "Chinese culture" with his topic (sports) by researching Yao Ming, an important Chinese sports figure, and further reflected on how basketball was viewed in China and the U.S. Additionally, Mark discussed how during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China was able to convey its cultural values and national identity to the world.

Many students, like Amy, believed "Americans have too many stereotypes" (post-trip interview). Stereotypes also were seen with Chinese people, as Andy



discovered in his fieldwork project centered on the Chinese people's perceptions of the U.S. and U.S. culture. He stated, "[T]he students [who I talked to during our school visits] seemed to have a much more limited scope of the U.S.... [M]any of those students learned about the U.S. from TV shows and movies." However, Andy thought these stereotypes could be dispelled through the SFSA course,

[When I asked Chinese people] 'What do you think of when America is mentioned?' Most people responded with stereotypical items, such as 'fat, burgers, freedom, Hollywood,' but [my contacts] responded with completely different answers.... [The] exposure to American culture made those participants culturally aware of America in a way that set them apart from their peers.

As a result of being a part of this SFSA, students realized how small the world was and started to ponder how higher education could help them broaden their horizons and better connect the world. In his post-trip interview, Andy remarked, "[It] helps to dispel some of the stereotypes we had about Asia." And, Amy wrote in her fieldwork report, "Once a basic understanding of difference is grasped, personal emergence into another culture through study abroad helps the individual rid themselves of their concept of "normal" and see the larger picture of what the world has to offer." Through participating in the SFSA program, Amy was able to reevaluate the differences between China and the U.S. in an open-minded way. Some students extended their discussions about cross-cultural differences to the next level by engaging in global issues during the post-trip interviews. For example, Andy said, "We in different countries should communicate more, get more cultural understanding for a better worldview." This shows evidence that the content and key messages of the interdisciplinary SFSA program were well received by the students. Thus, it suggests that the program promoted global mindedness, responding to higher education's call to foster global connectedness.

## Discussion

The importance of engaging *all* students through a global education reveals a critical situation in higher education – only certain groups of students are targeted in most SFSA programs (Gullekson, et al., 2011; Gonglewski & Helm, 2017; Tack & Carney, 2018). The goal of this study aimed to examine the Star University SFSA program in China where interdisciplinary faculty integrated an ethnographic fieldwork project to engage students from a variety of majors. The research question was: To what extent does the interdisciplinary SFSA program foster students' intercultural learning through ethnographic fieldwork project learning? The findings emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary engagement in a variety of learning contexts (pre-departure, time abroad, and post-trip). Specifically, the results show that the students benefitted from the interdisciplinary SFSA program through the interactions with peers and faculty from various backgrounds, they acquired new understandings of Chinese culture, and they enhanced their intercultural competence.

Bai et. al, (2016) learned that students' diverse academic backgrounds (e.g., social work, nursing, public health, psychology, sociology, biology) facilitated the



success of their health profession SFSA program, and they then expanded the course from medical social work to psychosocial care to “better involve students from other disciplines” (p.73). However, in their research, most students commented more on the interaction with Chinese students in Beijing than with their U.S. peers. The present study shows how the integration of students as well as faculty from various departments contributed to the success of the SFSA program at Star University. This successful interdisciplinary interaction lies in “co-teaching practices” where the faculty and students across disciplines were teaching and learning from one another by sharing their own perspectives during pre-departure in-class activities, in China, and post-trip ethnographic fieldwork reports (Tack & Carney, p. 63). For example, learning about different perspectives of their chosen topics from peers and faculty encouraged students to reconsider their assumptions and reevaluate their prior understandings. These experiences increased students’ intercultural awareness and further prompted them to recognize the issues associated with the global world.

Moreover, unlike the students who were world language majors in previous SFSA programs research studies that incorporated ethnographic project learning (Jackson, 2006, 2008; Roberts et al., 2001), the students in the present study had little to no Chinese background. The findings show that the “new” understandings they discovered seemed superficial at the beginning of the spring semester, as they overly used “new” in their pre-departure course assignments instead of reflecting on what specific cultural norms informed their intercultural learning. This points to the need for educators to provide a friendly environment to best prepare and guide those students who have little to no Chinese background to think more deeply about how and why these cultural norms and differences exist. The findings show that faculty successfully created an inclusive environment for all students to be aware of their own biases and misconceptions, while also providing a safe space for them to examine what these biases and misconceptions mean.

Following a carefully constructed curriculum centered on ethnographic project learning, the students seemed to articulate a deep understanding of the meaning of culture (Jackson, 2006). With the focus on a chosen topic, the students demonstrated an awareness of specific cultural norms where they constantly found resources to expand their project’s potential. As Deardorff (2006) advocates, intercultural competence is an ongoing process and it takes time. Integrating an ethnographic fieldwork project in the curriculum helped faculty understand students’ trajectory development of their intercultural learning (e.g., how the students utilized the resources they had before, during and after study abroad experiences to advance their intercultural competence). With the progression of their ethnographic project development, they began to enjoy and appreciate their personal growth in intercultural competence (Jackson, 2006, 2008; Roberts et al., 2001).

The significance of this study offers evidence that the interdisciplinary SFSA program at Star University provided students, especially non-Chinese majors/minors, with an initial exposure to the Chinese language and culture through their ethnographic fieldwork projects, gave them an opportunity to broaden perspectives on their own field of study, and further sparked their interest in global issues, which is essential to claim their identity as a globally-minded students.

### Implications and future directions

Given that this study summarizes the findings of a successful interdisciplinary SFSA program which included students across disciplines, I hope to shed light on the process of exploring interdisciplinary teaching and learning in higher education, which has implications for future programs and research. First, opportunities to study abroad should not be privileged to certain groups of students. To challenge the status quo, colleges and universities should continue with interdisciplinary collaboration to welcome all students to the short-term study abroad table. The findings of this study suggest that the more interactions there are between students and faculty members across disciplines during SFSA programs, the more likely students' intercultural competence is developed.

Second, due to the complexities of interdisciplinary SFSA programs, different student cohorts may be needed to further expand on the topic of global connectedness in the study abroad context. Future iterations of the program could include faculty and students from the STEM disciplines, such as chemistry, mathematics, and engineering. While examining linguistic gains was not a primary focus of the present study, the incorporation of language proficiency tests to the students who are foreign language majors/minors would provide the opportunity to enrich the study in the field of world language teaching and learning, especially for less commonly taught languages like Chinese. In sum, students participating in the Star University's interdisciplinary SFSA program and in this study clearly developed greater intercultural competence. In order to foster this development, colleges and universities should continue to provide short-term study abroad experiences that allow students to adapt to the rapidly changing global society.

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## **Appendix A: Fieldwork report directions, requirements, and evaluation**

### **FINAL FIELDWORK REPORT**

Your final fieldwork report is the culmination of all of your work from the spring semester pre-departure course and your study and research abroad in China. Your final paper should be about 5,000 – 10,000 words. You can include photographs in your document (or separately as an appendix). In your paper, you should reflect on your understandings of the historical and cultural contexts of your topic, your interviews and observations, and your adventures in China (that relate to your fieldwork). You may choose a writing style that is more academic or journalistic, depending on what kind of final product you desire. If you plan to apply to graduate school in an academic field, you should write an academic paper. Make sure that you have a clear thesis.

Whatever style you choose, be sure that all you cite all of your sources. The journalistic style tends to leave source citations to one chunk at the end. Your paper should have your sources cited throughout. Include a full bibliography (not your annotated bibliography – only the sources). For academic papers at least eight academic sources and 10 other sources should be included. Journalistic papers should include at least eight news articles from reputable sources and 10 other sources.

Use your research question that you developed in your fieldwork plan as the guiding focus of your paper. Draw upon your annotated bibliography to relate your fieldwork to outside ideas. If desired, you can create a comparative lens of what you thought you would find versus what you did find. You also may use ideas from the lecture during the pre-departure course about the cultural construction of realities as a guiding theme, or draw upon a theoretical framework related to your field of study.

If needed during the summer, please email [the program coordinator] with questions about your paper. You may want to discuss how various parts may best fit together, what information should be included or left out, the organization of the paper, or other components of writing a solid research paper.

In an Appendix to your paper, provide a sincere discussion of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and difficulties you experienced while executing your fieldwork project. This is a self-reflective portion that provides some of the background information or experiences that do not make it into your final paper. Also, provide a second Appendix document that explains the feedback you received from your classmate and from [the program coordinator] and how you revised your paper based on that feedback.

Your first draft is due Friday, July 21st. On Saturday, July 22nd, you will receive a classmate's paper through email. You are to provide feedback on that paper and email your feedback to both your classmate and [the program coordinator] by Friday, July 28th. [The program coordinator] also will provide feedback on your paper by July 28th. Revise your paper based on the feedback you get from your classmate and from [the program coordinator], then send your final paper to [the program coordinator] by Friday, August 4th. Please submit your assignment

through Blackboard. No need for paper copies. Remember, this paper can be used as your writing sample for graduate school, scholarships, or job applications. It can have an impact on your life in ways that are more far-reaching than just a grade. Putting in the extra effort can pay off!

#### Evaluation of Final Fieldwork Report

Research Question: Great discussion of research question, focused topic	15%
Literature Review/Outside Sources: Great integration of sources to provide context	20%
Data Presentation: Great discussion of fieldwork data and/or experiences	20%
Reflection Appendix: Resourcefulness in addressing problems, self-reflections	5%
Feedback Appendix: Integration and discussion of feedback into final paper	5%
Feedback given to classmate: Quality feedback on substance and copy editing	5%
Bibliography: appropriate number of sources, sources cited correctly	10%
Quality of Writing: Within word range, well proofread, great organization	20%
Total	100%

### **Appendix B: Pre-departure interview questions**

#### Background information

1. What's your name? Age? Ethnicity? Where are you from?
2. What year are you in? What is your major? Minor?
3. Are there any of your family members who have Chinese background? Who are they?
4. Do any of your family members speak/learn any foreign languages? Where? How long?
5. Have you ever taken any classes related to Chinese? What are these classes? How long?

#### Interview questions

1. How do you know about this program?
2. Why do you want to participate in this study abroad program?
3. Who did you talk to before signing up for the program? Why did you talk with these people? What were their attitudes toward this program?
4. What is the most useful skill/information you acquired from the pre-departure class?
5. Please talk about 1-2 things that you expected to learn from the pre-departure class but you haven't learned?
6. What is your fieldwork project about? How did you choose this topic?
7. How do you like the fieldwork project learning? Why or why not?
8. What changes would you make to maximize your learning?
9. Have you ever worried about your limited Chinese language ability?

might impact your study abroad experience? Why or why not?

10. Please give yourself a grade (1-100) for your performances in the pre-departure class. Why?

### **Appendix C: Post-trip interview questions**

1. Did this trip meet your expectations (1-100)? Why or why not?
2. How did you like the schedule in Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai, respectively?
3. What is the most useful skill/information you acquired in China?
4. Please talk about 1-2 things that made you feel uncomfortable/discouraged in China.
5. Do you think that it is necessary to take the pre-departure course before the China trip? A Chinese language class? Why or why not?
6. How did you like the school visits in Beijing and Shanghai, respectively?
7. Did you follow your own daily schedule that you had planned during the free days in China? Why or why not?
8. Did you complete your fieldwork project as you planned? Any difficulties?
9. How do you like the fieldwork project learning?
10. Do you think that you were more productive than the other students in China? Why or why not?
11. What do you think the program can do to maximize your learning?
12. What changes would you make to maximize your learning?
13. Please give yourself a grade (1-100) for your performances in China. Why?
14. What changes did you see in yourself after joining the program?

